

Socialist Worker

For a socialist alternative to New Labour

80p

**This is butchery
for oil and US power**

REVOLT AGAINST THE WAR

**Protest, walk out and
take to the streets**

National demo this Saturday

● London, 12 noon, Embankment and Gower Street

● Called by the Stop the War Coalition, the Muslim Association of Britain and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

BUSH AND BLAIR STAMP ON DEMOCRACY

Israel's nukes...

A BBC documentary on Monday night revealed that there is a Middle East state with nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction—Israel.

The programme looked at the case of Mordechai Vanunu. He was a former technician at Israel's secret nuclear plant who first exposed that Israel had nuclear bombs.

Israeli agents kidnapped Vanunu in Rome and smuggled him back to Israel. He has been in jail for 16 years, 11 of them in solitary confinement.

The documentary also showed that Israel has chemical and biological weapons production plants.

Yet there are no demands from the US and Britain for weapons inspectors or war to enforce the disarmament of Israel.

...and invasions

"IRAQ IS the only country in the Middle East to attack another in the last 15 years" was the lie repeated by cabinet ministers this week.

It is Israel that has invaded and occupied its neighbours more than any other in the Middle East.

Israel has launched several full-scale invasions of Lebanon. It has invaded and occupied parts of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. And it still occupies part of Syria today, the Golan Heights.

For over half a century Israel has occupied the bulk of the state given to Palestinians by the UN in 1947.

Israel has openly defied UN resolutions calling for it to withdraw from the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza which it has occupied since 1967.

Murder they ignore

ISRAEL THIS week murdered an American peace activist in the occupied Gaza Strip.

If this had happened in Baghdad and the murderers had been Iraqi forces this would have been headline news and used to justify war.

Yet barely a word was said over the murder of 23 year old American Rachel Corrie in the Palestinian refugee camp of Rafah.

Neither was Israel condemned for its murder of six Palestinians this week in the Nusseirat refugee camp. Those killed included four year old Elham as-Assar and a 13 year old boy.

Peace activist Rachel Corrie was trying to prevent Israeli bulldozers from demolishing a Palestinian house.

Nicholas Durrie, a 19 year old peace activist from Dundee in Scotland, reports, "One of the drivers saw Rachel and drove towards her. She was carried up with a heap of earth in the shovel of the bulldozer. The driver continued."

US war criminal

ONE OF the men who appeared on TV screens justifying war this week was US ambassador to the UN, John Negroponte.

Behind the suit and smooth talk this man is a criminal who has organised and financed murder and torture.

From 1964 to 1973 he worked with war criminal Henry Kissinger in the US war on Vietnam.

Negroponte was US ambassador in Honduras in Central America in the 1980s. There he helped organise death squads alongside the right wing military regime.

He also played a key role in organising the brutal Contra guerrillas who waged a terrorist campaign in Nicaragua.

Plea from Baghdad

UZMA BASHIR from Watford is currently in Baghdad. These are extracts from a letter she sent to Tony Blair:

"I AM a human shield, currently stationed at the important site of Durah Electrical Power Plant.

I hope the British presence including myself will deter US/UK bombing of this humanitarian site, which if bombed will not only stop power to hospitals, schools and homes but also will bring down sites such as water purification facilities which provides clean water to millions of Iraqi civilians.

Since my arrival in Iraq I have been overwhelmed with the generosity, love and compassion shown to me. These are clearly intelligent, beautiful people who have a right to live.

This war will not be in my name. How could you kill any family? Any neighbourhood?"



Their lies to justify killing

THE US and Britain have lied and stamped on every attempt at diplomacy to ensure their brutal war on Iraq goes ahead.

George Bush and Tony Blair tried to pose as peacemakers who were foiled at the United Nations (UN).

Foreign secretary Jack Straw resorted to blaming the French government for a war on Iraq.

He claimed the French threat to use their veto at the UN Security Council against the planned pro-war resolution of the US, Britain and Spain was the reason for war.

But even the BBC's UN correspondent tore apart Straw's ridiculous claim. "The majority of the Security Council were standing up to the US's new doctrine of pre-emptive strikes," he said.

"The great result of five months of

bargaining and arm twisting at the UN was the US winning over of Bulgaria."

Bush and Blair were only prepared to tolerate a new UN resolution as long as it would act as a fig-leaf for military action.

The US could not even stomach an alternative plan put forward by Chile, one of the six countries it wanted to win over to backing war, because it included a three-week deadline.

The delegation got less than 100 yards from their meeting rooms towards the UN council chamber to distribute the new proposal before it was dismissed as "a non-starter" by White House spokesman Ari Fleischer.

Bush and Blair cannot pose as peacemakers. They tried to bully and bribe other UN countries to back their warmongering, and when they failed they pushed ahead with war.

This will be occupation and not liberation

NO ONE knows how war will unfold.

What is certain is that Bush and Blair are gambling on their overwhelming military force being enough to win a quick victory.

They hope their forces will march into Basra and Baghdad and be greeted by cheering Iraqis.

If that was to happen it would not be the first time a conquering army had been hailed in this way.

Moreover this will not be the end of the problems faced by the occupying army, but the beginning.

War could throw a fragile Iraqi society into turmoil that could quickly spiral out of control.

There are thousands of Iraqi refugees from the southern city of Basra living just across the border in Iran. Many have been armed

by Iran. If they returned they would be unlikely to simply accept living under Western military rule and occupation. Iran, after all, is part of Bush's "axis of evil".

In the north of Iraq Kurdish forces hope to seize the key oil cities of Kirkuk and Mosul.

They could look to drive out or kill Arabs and Turkish speakers who form part of those cities' populations.

Turkey is already looking for a pretext to send its forces into northern Iraq to seize part of the country and teach its own Kurds a lesson.

In Afghanistan we were told the US and British war would bring peace, prosperity and stability.

Instead the country is today in turmoil, with rival warlords fighting for influence and starvation haunting people in many regions.

US is the veto king

BUSH AND Blair railed about the French government's "unreasonable" threat of a veto at the United Nations (UN).

But just three months ago the US vetoed a resolution condemning the killing of UN workers by Israeli soldiers and the destruction of a UN warehouse filled with food for Palestinians.

Russia has only vetoed two UN security council resolutions since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

China has used its veto on only five occasions.

France has vetoed on only 18 occasions, 13 of those alongside US and Britain.

Britain has vetoed 32 UN resolutions. The US is the veto king. It has used its veto 76 times.

Who has weapons of mass destruction?

ROBIN COOK admitted the truth in parliament on Monday after resigning from the government.

He said Iraq does not have "weapons of mass destruction in the commonly understood sense of that term."

Cook's admission blows apart the central case pushed by Blair over recent months.

Cook was at the heart of the government as it pumped out successive dossiers claiming Iraq had such weapons.

Now all that is exposed as lies.

Even Blair does not now claim that Iraq has nuclear weapons—his central claim only weeks ago.

There will be weapons of mass destruction used in the war. They will be unleashed by US and British forces.

●US forces are ready to use the MOAB (massive ordnance air burst) bomb. This terrifying weapon contains 21,000 pounds of high explosive which detonates above ground.

It wipes out everything within a one mile radius and is designed to have the same impact on people as nuclear bombs.

●Jack Straw effectively admitted in parliament that US and British forces will use CLUSTER BOMBS.

These scatter smaller bombs over a wide area which work like landmines, supposed to be illegal under international treaties. They lie around long after conflicts have ended, and kill and maim children who are

attracted by the bright yellow colouring.

●DEPLETED URANIUM shells will be used by US and Britain. These burn through armour to incinerate anyone inside. Depleted uranium shells leave radioactive dust strewn around the landscape.

Those used in southern Iraq in the last Gulf War are believed to be responsible for an epidemic of childhood leukemia and other diseases, as well as Gulf War syndrome.

●The US has NUCLEAR WEAPONS in its arsenal, and is ready to use them.

Its "robust nuclear earth penetrator" is designed to burrow into the ground before detonating with horrifying effects. The US also has nuclear warheads available on its cruise missiles.

Socialist Worker

Editorial: 020 7538 0828
Circulation and business: 020 7538 3305
National office: 020 7538 5821
Industrial Department: 020 7987 1919

All correspondence to PO Box 82, London E3 3LH
Published weekly except final week of December.
Published and printed by Larkham Printers and Publishers Ltd (TU all departments)

Registered as a newspaper with the Royal Mail

Socialist Worker is on the internet at www.socialistworker.co.uk

More than ever it is right to say no

BUSH AND Blair have signalled the start of mass murder in Iraq.

They are prepared to turn Iraq into a wasteland of blasted bodies, shattered minds, mangled corpses and weeping children.

This war has always been wrong. It remains so now.

It does not become better or "moral" or worthy of anyone's support because the missiles are launched and British soldiers are sent into battle.

It was wrong for the US and Britain to threaten to incinerate Iraqi civilians.

It does not become right when threats turn into a chilling reality.

It is still a war for oil and US power.

All the casualties of the war will be the responsibility of Bush and Blair.

That includes all the Iraqi civilians and soldiers, and the forces who the politicians cynically call "our boys".

Politicians will sit in the comfort of their offices and armchairs in London and Washington and order people recruited from mainly working class areas to carry out the killing, and be killed.

And when war is finished those soldiers will be tossed aside, just as those suffering from Gulf War syndrome after the last war on Iraq were.

We should have no truck either with those politicians who oppose war until it starts.

Clare Short deserves all the backlash that her pathetic excuses for backing Blair will bring.

Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy too deserves nothing but contempt.

He said last weekend, "If we find under whatever circumstances that British troops are committed in the name of this country to take action they will have our unequivocal moral support."

He was against war without UN backing—until it actually happened.

Some Labour MPs have gone down the same route. They are putting their name to butchery.

Others say that now the war has started we must hope for a quick



SCHOOL STUDENTS, like these in London last week, college students, workers and others planned protests for when war starts

victory for the US.

But the quicker and more decisively Bush's army wins, the longer will be the suffering for people across the world.

It will strengthen every rabid rightwinger in the White House. It will feed a cycle of more wars to extend the US empire.

The US will feel stronger to squeeze the Third World dry and trample on any obstacle to the rule of profit.

In the last three wars the generals have resorted to ever more barbarous methods as war has gone on.

This time the scale of the anti-war feeling is such that we can make it more difficult for them to do that, provided we keep up the protests.

Far from stifling our criticism of the war, it is now more urgent than ever to protest.

Far from "pulling together around Tony" we should be demanding even louder that he goes now.

Turn anger into action

HUNDREDS OF millions of people across the world are more revolted and angrier than ever about the war.

That feeling has to be immediately turned into action.

We are part of a global movement. Protests when war starts, and demonstrations on Saturday, are planned across the world.

We need a massive, angry protest to fill the streets of London this Saturday.

As *Socialist Worker* went to press on Tuesday we were getting scores of reports from across Britain of workers, students and others deciding to walk out to join protests when war starts.

The Stop the War Coalition,

backed by trade union leaders and many others, has called for protests in schools, colleges and workplaces when war starts, and on following days.

At the People's Assembly last week Billy Hayes, general secretary of the CWU post, telecom and finance workers' union, said, "When war breaks out we want to see as many CWU members as possible out on the streets protesting against this war."

Bob Crow, leader of the RMT rail union, also issued a rallying cry for action:

"If Tony Blair is going to take illegal action then we should also take illegal action in the form of civil disobedience.

"We need non-violent demonstrations. If that means stopping the traffic, if it means sitting in the streets, if it means occupying our factories then so be it.

"We can start having extended work breaks to discuss the issue and to go and visit other workers. We've got to start putting our money where our mouth is."

The first day of war must not be the end of protests.

We must continue to build demonstrations and to focus the outrage that could grow even stronger as the killing goes on.

■ **When war starts we will rush out a special issue of *Socialist Worker*. Supporters should be prepared to distribute it.**

What you should do:

- When war starts organise walkouts, protest, take direct action
- Join the national demonstration in London on Saturday

STOP THE WAR COALITION

Phone 020 7053 2153/4/5/6 E-mail office@stopwar.org.uk

Web www.stopwar.org.uk Write to PO Box 3739, London E5 8EJ



A short war will boost US power

SOME IN the anti-war movement argue that once war starts it would be better for it to be over quickly, with the US and Britain winning with the minimum of fighting.

That is an understandable reaction, motivated by wanting to see the least loss of life in the immediate conflict.

It is, however, mistaken.

The US doesn't want war just to remove Saddam Hussein. It wants to show that it can use its military power to impose its will anywhere in the world.

The easier the US finds that in Iraq the more likely it will go on to use military power elsewhere.

Bush already has a list of possible targets—Iran, North Korea, Syria, Libya, Cuba.

The US has already meddled with attempted coups against the elected government of Venezuela in South America.

And the US backs the right wing government in a civil war in neighbouring Colombia.

A quick victory in Iraq will make war more likely in these areas.

It would also mean the US would push even harder to impose its interests and those of the corporations that back it across the globe.

There would be even more savage IMF austerity programmes to suck wealth out of indebted countries.

Multinational drugs companies would be more determined to deny AIDS treatments to the poorest countries of the world.

Wings

US power would also swing even harder behind regimes such as Israel, so bringing more suffering to the Palestinian people.

Everywhere there would be the spectre of an emboldened US military in the wings to ensure no government dared cross the US.

Of course, even the mightiest empire is not immune from mass revolts which can humble it.

But the immediate result of a quick victory in Iraq would be to strengthen the US ruling class and its allies and weaken those who oppose it.

A victorious Bush would also find it easier to push through attacks at home, as would a victorious Blair.

Socialists have done and continue to do all in our power to build the movement to prevent war and to stop war when it starts.

But if war starts the very worst outcome would be a quick victory for the US and Britain.

The best response to war would be protests across the globe which make it impossible for Bush and Blair to continue.

But while war lasts by far the lesser evil would be reverses, or defeat, for the US and British forces.

That may be unlikely, given the overwhelming military superiority they enjoy. But it would be the best outcome in military terms.

It would make it more likely that Blair would not survive, and Bush would be in trouble too.

It would limit the ability of the US and its allies to impose suffering, war and death on an even bigger scale.

inside the system

IN THE FRAME



No. 2 AUDREY BAXTER

AUDREY BAXTER is the chief executive and "chairman" of the giant soup firm Baxters.

One unnamed director, rumoured to be Baxter, picked up a £693,000 salary increase, taking her close to the million pound mark.

Meanwhile, some 1,100 Baxters workers have suffered pay cuts and discovered the firm's pension fund has a £2.6 million shortfall.

Economical with the elderly

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown decides on the level of the basic state pension, so he should know how much it is.

In an interview with the *Inside Labour* magazine he explains that "a pensioner at the moment gets £67 a week".

Wrong, Mr Brown. In fact a single pensioner gets £75.50.

Either Brown doesn't really care how much they get or he was hinting at what's to come.

Family ties that don't bind

IS THERE a family rift brewing in the household of right wing, pro-war Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi?

Last week his wife, Veronica, said that the Italian anti-war demonstrations "merit respect. If it weren't for them, there would be a spiritual desert."

Anti-war voter has Twigged

NEW Labour education minister Stephen Twigg has been indulging in the "doublespeak" of George Orwell's famous novel *1984*.

A constituent challenged pro-war Twigg to explain why he refused to take part in public debates over his stance.

"I have taken part in a public debate," replied Twigg, citing his meeting with the Enfield United Nations Association as proof.

The constituent checked with the association and found out that the meeting was private.

Twigg's office replied, "It was a public-private meeting."

Gun games smear is not just child's play

IS TRUTH at the Rupert Murdoch owned *Times Education Supplement (TES)* the first casualty of war?

That's the question being asked by parents at New River Green nursery in Islington, London.

The nursery was telephoned by the *TES* to ask if their photographer could come to observe and take photographs of children to illustrate an article about "superhero play".

The nursery was also asked if they had seen an increase in war games amongst nursery children, to which staff replied that they had not.

The nursery agreed to the photographer taking pictures of superhero play.

But when Sheila Harrison, a parent at the nursery, bought the paper she was shocked by what she saw splashed on the



LOTS OF children have joined anti-war demos

front page.

Under the title "Pupils Get Trigger Happy" was a staged photo of her three year old son in an aggressive stance.

He was brandishing a makeshift piece of plastic made to look like a gun.

Apart from the fact that both the image and the article are very misleading, Sheila and

other parents are against war and have attended the peace demonstrations, some of them with their young children.

Her three year old son was one of the many young children on the two million strong march last month.

The *TES* article claimed that nursery children all over the country were playing war-games in response to the Iraqi crisis, a story "backed up" by quotes from staff and academics elsewhere.

Parents subsequently discovered that other professionals cited in the article had been quoted out of context.

Parents at the nursery are demanding a full public apology from the *TES* for this misleading article and exploitation of children, and will be taking the matter to the Press Complaints Commission.



Recession buster bust

A POSSIBLE major scandal surrounding the vast Canary Wharf office development, east London, was barely reported last week.

The complex went bust in the early 1990s, but was bailed out by the government.

Canary Wharf has since expanded, with a huge array

of giant new office blocks.

It attracted huge sums of money from City investors by claiming it had signed 25-year leases with clients occupying office space making it "recession proof".

Last week it emerged that the leases had get-out clauses allowing companies

to bale out of commitments.

Investors were furious. Canary Wharf shares collapsed as a result, slumping by over a third at one point.

The prospect of buildings once more standing empty, and the company going bust, looms again.

FIGURE IT OUT

23

THE NUMBER of years it would take someone on average male earnings to repay their student debt under government plans to impose top-up fees. Someone on average female earnings may never be able to repay the debt.

Poster defies cops

WORKERS at the CH Cash and Carry shop in King's Heath, Birmingham, put up a "Stop the War on Iraq, freedom for Palestine" poster.

But the police told them to take it down.

Store manager Aftab Nazir said, "The policeman

accused us of spreading racial hatred.

"He said if we did not take it down he was going to take us to court and even prison."

The staff complained to the police and forced them to retract. The poster is now back up.

Profits up in smoke

ONE COMPANY in Britain must be very happy with Tony Blair.

Fire protection firm Kidde has announced booming profits.

Its sales were boosted by £1 million when it won the contract to kit out the army's clapped-out Green Goddess

fire engines during the firefighters' dispute.

Last year it won a £10 million deal to supply Iraq with fire trucks and equipment.

The Middle East "is a good market for safety and protection at the moment", purrs Kidde chief executive Michael Harper.



WHO SAYS?

"A large part of military action will be stopping people fighting each other."

CLARE SHORT
international development secretary

"You go in there with both barrels. You let them know they are taking on the US army and you crush them."

JOHN W CHARLTON
US colonel to troops in the Gulf

"I won't say they're off limits."

TOMMY FRANKS
US general admitting the US considers schools, hospitals and mosques in Iraq as legitimate targets

"With its banner of the Prince of Peace in one hand and its loot-basket and its butcher-knife in the other."

MARK TWAIN
describing the US's first imperial adventure 100 years ago

"This is a miserable life. We spend our whole life shopping for wars or hiding from bombs."

AHMED
an Iraqi in Baghdad

"Mr Blair strikes me as possessing the capacity of the religious maniac to regurgitate any piece of garbage which may be required in the temporary service of some higher cause."

ALAN WATKINS
veteran *Independent* correspondent

"Repressed socially and often someone you cannot trust."

GRAPHOLOGIST analyses Tony Blair's handwriting



Do you have a story for Inside the System? Send it to Inside the System, Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH. All readers who send in a story that is printed are put into a monthly raffle for a book.

Worldwide anti-war protests

Bush & Blair are in tiny minority

THE BRITISH press tried to claim last week that the French government was responsible for war on Iraq. It said that France’s opposition to immediate war meant that it was part of an isolated minority. Tony Blair’s official spokesman said French refusal to support war was “in-

by **CHARLIE KIMBER**

jecting poison into the bloodstream of diplomacy”. In fact Bush and Blair are in a tiny poisonous minority. The drive to war against Iraq is one of the most undemocratic acts in human history.

There are very few other events where global opinion has been so closely gauged, or more comprehensively spurned by a few thuggish powers.

Last weekend’s Azores summit saw just four leaders gather out of the world’s 191 states.

Bush and Blair could not escape anti-war protesters even on this group of mid-Atlantic islands.

Around 300 people protested against the war outside the summit held by the “coalition of the killing”.

At the summit hosted by Portuguese leader Barroso, George Bush, Tony Blair and Jose Maria Aznar finalised plans to attack Iraq.

They could not even claim to speak decisively for the people in their own countries, let alone the world.

In Britain around 15 percent of people are for a unilateral assault by the US and its allies on Iraq.

Bare

In Portugal it is 10 percent and in Spain 4 percent. Even in the US opinion polls last weekend showed a bare majority for an attack by the US and a few allies without UN backing.

In February the Gallup organisation polled 41 countries across the world about the war.

The astounding results show just how few people back the US and its allies attacking Iraq without UN support (see box).

Even with UN support, the poll found majority backing for war from people in only a handful of countries.

There is strong opposition to war in all the “swing six” countries on the UN Security Council.

Bush and Blair have been trying to bully and bribe them into backing a pro-war second resolution.

The six countries include Mexico (80 percent against war), Cameroon (85 percent against war) and Chile (70 percent against).

There have been few reliable opinion polls in Pakistan, Guinea and Angola. But in all of them the overwhelming majority of those who have spoken are against the war.

In Pakistan, in defiance of bans, huge marches have called for no support for Bush.

The Eastern European states which have been pummelled into supporting the US are Washington’s version of a new Warsaw Pact.

Under Stalinist rule the people in Eastern Europe were not allowed free speech or basic democracy. Now they have limited rights to say what they think — but their leaders ignore them.

The leaders of Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic have all lined up with Bush and Blair.

The vast majority of the world is against what the US and Britain are doing.

Even greater numbers will be revolted and outraged by the slaughter and the devastation inflicted.

ONE MILLION protesters took over the streets of Madrid in Spain last Saturday

Millions march against US’s ‘law of the jungle’

THERE WERE huge protests last weekend against the war.

Over two million marched in Spain. Around one million demonstrated in Madrid and up to half a million took part in a human chain in a rainy Barcelona that linked the US consul with the headquarters of Aznar’s party.

There were massive protests in Valencia, Zaragossa and elsewhere.

Portuguese writer and Nobel laureate Jose Saramago told the Madrid demonstration, “We are marching against the law of the jungle that the US and its acolytes old and new want to impose on the world.”

Other demonstrations in Europe included 100,000 in Berlin, 50,000 in Paris, 15,000 in Athens, 50,000 in Brussels, 5,000 in Marseilles, Stockholm and Copenhagen, as well as smaller protests in Thessaloniki in

Greece, Bucharest in Romania, and Moscow.

In Milan, 700,000 participated in an anti-war protest organised by Italy’s largest trade union confederation, the CGIL.

It sent a message threatening strike action at the outbreak of war.

Around 10,000 marched through central Tokyo. The day before the Japanese government had offered full support for a US war against Iraq.

In Seoul, South Korea, 3,000 demonstrators staged a candle-light protest.

Other demonstrations took place in Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin, New Zealand; in Melbourne and a dozen other Australian cities; in Hong Kong, Bangkok, India and Vietnam.

Nearly 10,000 marched through the Turkish port city of Iskenderun

where the US military was unloading military equipment for the war on Iraq.

Smaller protests were held in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus; in Cairo, Egypt and in the Gaza Strip.

The three main demonstrations in the United States were in Washington DC and San Francisco drawing well over 50,000 each.

Another 30,000 marched in Portland, Oregon, and smaller protests took place in dozens of cities and towns, including Cambridge, Massachusetts and Lansing, Michigan.

In Canada 250,000 marched in Montreal, in one of the biggest demonstrations in the history of the country, and thousands more in Toronto.

The largest protest in Latin America came in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, where 10,000 people marched on the US Embassy.

No backing in Angola for this war for oil

IF YOU say that you are for a war against Iraq in Angola then people think you are a mad person.

There are few countries which have suffered so much at the hands of the world system that is waging war on Iraq.

If the US succeeds in reordering the world as it wants then it will mean more power for the multinationals, the arms firms and the bankers who squeeze debt from us.

Why should we go to war for Bush when it was the US government that played a big part in wrecking our country in the 1970s and 1980s by backing right wing rebel forces?

Why should we go to war for oil when we see in our own country that oil wealth never benefits anyone but a few rich people at the top of society?

LUCAS MUACHICUNGO, anti-war activist, Luanda, Angola

GLOBAL NO

Are you in favour of military action against Iraq unilaterally by the US and its allies?

YES: Denmark 10 percent, Finland 6 percent, Ireland 8 percent, Spain 4 percent, Iceland 7 percent, Switzerland 5 percent, France 6 percent, Germany 9 percent, Luxembourg 5 percent, Netherlands 7 percent, Albania 7 percent, Bosnia & Herzegovina 9 percent, Bulgaria 5 percent, Estonia 9 percent, Georgia 9 percent, Macedonia 4 percent, Romania 11 percent, Russia 7 percent, Yugoslavia 8 percent, Argentina 3 percent, Bolivia 9 percent, Canada 10 percent, Colombia 15 percent, Ecuador 3 percent, Uruguay 9 percent, Australia 12 percent, Hong Kong 8 percent, Malaysia 3 percent, New Zealand 8 percent, Pakistan 3 percent, Cameroon 9 percent, Nigeria 10 percent, Kenya 17 percent, South Africa 9 percent, Uganda 20 percent.

Source: Gallup International Iraq poll 2003.

Workers take action

IN MANY parts of Europe workers joined in 15 minute stoppages on Friday of last week to show their opposition to war on Iraq.

In Spain five million workers took part in action. It was strongest in large firms and the public sector. Cities were paralysed as thousands of workers poured from offices, hospitals and schools to block roads and chant slogans against the war and the

Aznar government.

In Germany protests halted vehicle production at three Volkswagen factories and a DaimlerChrysler plant. Trams ground to a halt in the eastern city of Halle.

In Italy workers downed tools from Sicily in the south to Turin in the north. There was a series of protest strikes by transport workers seeking to disrupt the movement of US war materials through Italy.

Picture: arbeiterfotografie.com

Picture: PA PHOTOS/EPA

Letters@socialistworker.co.uk

SEND TO PO BOX 82 LONDON E3 3LH | PHONE 020 7538 0828 | FAX 020 7538 0140

YOUR VIEW

Schools walkout gave me a smile

IT WAS inspiring to hear about the school student walkout against war. I was especially happy to hear about the students at Fortismere School in north London.

The indignation of the deputy head gave me a good laugh. Rather than the students it is Bush and Blair who are behaving in an “irresponsible and dangerous” way.

Here in Taiwan we have seen further protests urging the government to take an anti-war position.

Paul Ellis
(ex Fortismere teacher), Taiwan

Students struck in the US too

AROUND 400 schools and colleges in the US staged walkouts for the Books Not Bombs campaign on Wednesday of last week.

At the University of Colorado hundreds of students took part in the student strike. We had one of the largest marches, in which around 1,500 students took part.

People are making the link between the severe cuts in services round here and the war.

Karen Evans
Denver

Rise up to stop the warmongers

PEOPLE ARE opposed to the killing of innocent men, women and children in Iraq.

War could lead to the end of New Labour. I talk



School students strike

to people who say that while they have always voted Labour, they will not do so again.

Members of parliament should remember the poll tax—Blair is whistling past the graveyard.

The way forward is for the people of the world to rise up and overthrow the warmongers.

Ron Acock
Ilkeston

Will they crack down on Nazis?

THE MUSLIM cleric Sheik Abdullah el-Faisal was recently sentenced to nine years in jail for “fanning the flames of hostility” against Jews and Hindus.

Judges and courts rarely show such willingness to crack down so heavily on more dangerous practitioners of race hatred.

A court jailed Nazi BNP deputy leader Tony

Lecomber for three years for a ferocious attack on a Jewish schoolteacher in 1991.

BNP leader Nick Griffin was given a two-year suspended sentence for incitement to racial hatred in 1998 after denying the



Nazi leader Griffin

Holocaust.

When will these racists get the same kind of sentence as el-Faisal?

Peter David
by e-mail

GMB: It's right to back Kenny

JOHN McLoughlin (Letters, 15 March) should not be surprised that *Socialist Worker* is backing Paul Kenny for GMB union general secretary in the upcoming elections.

There are areas where socialists may disagree with Kenny but he is the more progressive choice and the candidate Blair would least like to see win.

As the current London regional secretary he has been active in building support for the firefighters and the recent anti-war march as well as raising questions on the funding of the Labour Party.

Under these circumstances the left has to support Kenny.

Dick Pole

GMB North West London branch secretary (personal capacity)

Another outrage for the *Record*

THE LABOUR-supporting Scottish paper the *Daily Record* ran a disgusting story in 2001 claiming that the murdered Kurdish refugee Firsat Yildiz Dag was a “conman”.

The paper was at it again last week. It says it has discovered an African woman in Glasgow who is selling documents claiming to certify HIV-positive status for £1,500.

This came just days after a campaign had been launched against the deportation of HIV-positive women back to Africa.

Under the headline “Asylum Seeker AIDS Con”, the paper claimed that these documents could help asylum seekers stay in Britain. This is a pack of lies.

The Home Office does not take HIV status into account in asylum cases.

The NHS does not give HIV treatment on the basis of documentation. It always carries out its own tests.

Mark Brown
secretary Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees

THE AUTHORITIES refused to allow the Daouds to remain at their home in Nottingham

The Daouds are the human cost of attacks on refugees

THE *FINANCIAL Times* carried a report on Wednesday of last week that David Blunkett is trying to reduce the number of people from Iraq who are granted asylum in Britain.

Apparently Iraqis make up the largest group requesting asylum. This is hardly surprising given the present situation.

The human cost of this cruel and hypocritical directive is illustrated by what has happened to the Iraqi refugee family the

Daouds. They have been living in the St Anns area of Nottingham.

Jamil and Sara Daoud, and their four young children Majid, Hoda, Mostafa and Marwa, have been deported to Spain.

The rationale for this is that in their scramble to get out of Baghdad, Sara and the three youngest children passed through Spain on their way to Britain.

Jamil and Majid fled to Britain via Germany.

None of the family speak

Spanish. They do speak English, and were very well settled in Nottingham with all four children doing well at Sycamore School.

They were very popular and surrounded by friends. Sara is now said to be suicidal.

A previous attempt to deport them was stopped by a broad campaign in Nottingham.

Last August a mob-handed police raid whisked them off without any warning and banged them

up behind the barbed wire of Harmondsworth detention centre at Heathrow.

The fact that Jamil was a Kurdish opponent of Saddam Hussein, and had been tortured in Baghdad, made no difference to the Home Office.

The Home Office did not lift the threat of deportation but granted a judicial review of their case. It allowed the Daouds back to their home in Nottingham.

The legal process has

now run its course. The nonsensical deportation decision has been found to be perfectly legal.

Distraught friends are trying their best to support the family in Spain, where they are under threat of deportation back to Iraq.

No one who has heard nine year old Hoda’s graphic description of the escape from Iraq can doubt the terrible pressure that this family has been under.

John Shemeld
Nottingham

We gave Blair a taste of the anger

I HAD the dubious “honour” of meeting Tony Blair last week when I took part in the *Tonight with Trevor MacDonald* debate along with 17 other women opposed to a war with Iraq.

I was invited to take part after working in Palestine as a nurse for four years and because of my involvement with the Stop the War Coalition in Exeter.

The group of women went into the room unconvinced by Blair’s arguments for war.

We came out convinced that this man will lead us into a wholly unjustified and dangerous war that will have terrible repercussions around the world.

I’m sure the prime minister entered the room thinking he could charm us with his “you must trust me”

speech.

That did not wash with us or the majority of people in this country.

We can see his double standards with countries like Israel who have flouted more UN resolutions than Iraq, with their continued illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and their treatment of the Palestinians.

I hope Tony Blair got an insight into the anger and hostility of ordinary people.

I am so pleased that I had the opportunity to be able to say to Blair that war is “not in my name”.

Make sure he doesn’t do it in your name either. Make sure you protest, walk out, occupy and demonstrate against Blair and Bush’s bloody war.

Lizi Allnatt
Exeter

Call for support from Zimbabwe

THE opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in Zimbabwe expelled the socialist MP for Highfield, Munyaradzi Gwisai, in November last year.

Gwisai is a member of the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), *Socialist Worker’s* sister organisation in Zimbabwe.

We have decided to field Gwisai as a candidate for the Highfield by-election on 29 and 30 March.

The support we have in the industrial areas surrounding Highfield, where the vast majority of workers live, is solid.

Of the three MDC party structures in Highfield, one has come out in support of Gwisai.

Of the three MDC councillors in Highfield, one has come out in support of the ISO candidate. The MDC youth wing in the area has split.

We desperately need money to cover the costs of the campaign.

The details of our bank account are First Direct Bank, 40 Wakefield Road, Leeds LS98 1FO. The account name is John Page, the account number 1118 54 89 and the sort code 40-47-78.

Please e-mail details of deposits to isozim@hotmail.com for the attention of Rosa Zulu or e-mail rosazulu@hotmail.com Rosa Zulu ISO Zimbabwe

Active fight

I WAS part of a delegation of firefighters from all parts of the country who lobbied MPs to support our pay campaign last week.

Lynne Jones, left wing Labour MP, abstained from voting against the scrapping of Section 19 of the Fire Services Act because she thinks we’re going to be defeated anyway.

The abolition of Section 19 will make it easier to shut or downgrade fire stations and cut services.

Jones warned us that in the run-up to war we needed to be “tactical”. At least she didn’t ask us to abstain!

Millions of people are opposed to war. We need to strike and call on these people to support us. This is the way to pressure MPs and the key to our victory.
Neale Williams
North London

Picture: NOTTINGHAM EVENING POST

Labour's deepest crisis in generations

Now actions speak louder than words for Labour rebels, argues Kevin Ovenden



Picture: ANGELA STAPLEFORD

EVERY SINGLE MP who backed war on Tuesday has blood on their hands. The result of the parliamentary vote was not known as *Socialist Worker* went to press.

But two things were clear from that debate, and the one the day before that followed foreign secretary Jack Straw's statement and Robin Cook's resignation.

First, the hardened Blairites who control the Labour Party are prepared to rely on Tory support to drive through this terrible war.

Second, the mass anti-war movement has provoked the deepest split inside the Labour Party since the 1930s.

Those Labour MPs who did vote against the government were reflecting that deep popular mood.

But there was no escaping the stench of hypocrisy and lies oozing from those who rubber-stamped slaughter.

They knew they were voting to blow Iraqi civilians to bits. Anti-war MP Joan Ruddock told Jack Straw on Monday that the test of his claim to keep civilian casualties low "will be no cluster bombs, no depleted uranium, and no targeting of water and food supplies".

He refused to answer but said, "We have to acknowledge the fact that people will be killed if there is military action, and that some of them will be innocent people."

Anti-war MPs fought to be heard amid the parade of New Labour lackeys serving up supposed questions to Jack Straw which were really dollops of war-mongering propaganda.

The fawning is ridiculous at the best of times. When the issue is waging war, it becomes sickening.

Clive Soley MP defied all logic and demanded war, saying, "We cannot go on passing resolutions unless we are resolved to act."

By then everyone knew that the United Nations Security Council had decided NOT to pass a resolution and Bush and Blair were going to "act" anyway.

Labour MP Kali Mountford and others repeatedly said the only problem at the UN was opposition from France.

Four hours earlier the bulk of the world's media, including the BBC, had

reported that there was flat opposition from the bulk of countries on the Security Council to immediate war.

But one after another they trotted out the line until Jane Griffiths, Labour MP for Reading East, accused the "perfidious" French of creating the conditions for future wars.

Labour MP George Foulkes said the "publication of the road map for Palestine" promised by Bush has "given real hope for the people of Palestine."

Minutes later Jack Straw admitted the "road map" had not even been published. No one mentioned that Israel's Ariel Sharon had ruled out an independent Palestinian state that morning.

Most of those Labour MPs backing the government are hardened warmongers. Others are simply deluded. No one sums up the delusion more than Clare Short.

Instead of making good her threat to resign from the cabinet, she announced on Tuesday she would remain part of a government that goes to war without the UN-backing she had said was so important.

Shredded principles

SHE SAID she was swayed because the UN will be involved in Iraq after all. But the UN's only job will be to pick up the pieces after the US and Britain have shattered Iraq with missiles and bombs.

And amid a deluge of flattery from the likes of Peter Hain and Margaret Beckett, Short was apparently reassured that she would play a key role in such a "reconstruction".

Her vanity was soothed and she got to keep her £120,000 a year cabinet post.

So she shredded her oft-paraded principles to help Blair launch a war and unleash a humanitarian disaster that she can then pretend she is leading the world to solve.

We were told last year that Britain and the US would "not walk away" from helping the people of Afghanistan. Heroin production there is now at record levels, as peasants are left with no alternative to growing opium.

The country is divided between rival warlords. Just 8.4 percent of the money

UN aid agencies say Afghanistan requires has actually arrived.

Somalia, scene of a previous US adventure, gets just 6 percent of the aid the UN says it needs. Palestine has to make do with 2.9 percent.

Clare Short knows these figures, as should every Labour MP.

A tiny few could possibly change their minds if the war is longer and more bloody than predicted.

But everyone will remember that those who voted for war this week have allowed such atrocities to happen.

Powerful left challenge

THE CRISIS inside the Labour Party and in British society is immense.

But there are those, such as Robin Cook, who argue it must not lead to a challenge to Tony Blair. Limiting the rebellion in this way will not stop the war. Blair is sworn to carry on backing the US as long as he is in office.

That is of a piece with his and New Labour's determination to ram through privatisation in the NHS, favours for big business, attacks on union rights and every other Tory policy.

Large numbers of Labour supporters have had enough. And they want far more than vague speculation that Gordon Brown might replace Blair sometime before the next election in 2006.

Already there is a growing list of candidates standing in the May elections as socialists and anti-war candidates. Some firefighters are also standing.

The Scottish Socialist Party is taking votes from New Labour in the run-up to elections to the Edinburgh parliament.

What is needed now is for all those disaffected Labour supporters, trade unionists and anti-war activists to come together to build a powerful left challenge to New Labour.

Blair can survive if opposition is restricted to parliamentary games and discontent in his own party which the hierarchy can sit on or dismiss.

It can be a different story if he and the New Labour machine are confronted with an organised left opposition that fights them on every front.

Divisions cut across whole party

THE parliamentary rebellion goes well beyond those who have opposed the previous two wars Blair has waged.

Robin Cook sat down on Monday between former cabinet ministers Frank Dobson and Chris Smith. Ministers not associated with the left, such as Lord Hunt and John Denham, resigned on Tuesday.

Most of the rebels come from the centre right of the party. Most of them backed Neil

Kinnock as he moved the Labour Party to the right in the 1980s, and, in opposition, backed the Falklands War.

Bitterness at the base of the Labour Party is even deeper. Surveys say 30,000 members are considering leaving.

Len Dole from Nelson and Colne, a Labour Party member for over 70 years, is one of many who cannot take any more. He ripped up his party card on Monday.

Labour leaders in

Scotland fear losing votes to the Scottish Socialist Party and Scottish National Party in elections to the Edinburgh parliament in May.

The backlash Blair has created can force him out of the war.

That will only happen if every MP who voted against war throws himself into building the anti-war movement, protests and walkouts that can make it impossible for Blair to carry on.

Socialist Review



MILLIONS SAY NO TO WAR

- Lindsey German on what next for the anti-war movement
- Alex Callinicos on strategies for revolution
- Brian Manning pays tribute to Christopher Hill

£1.50 from *Socialist Worker* sellers, or phone 020 7538 3308 for credit card orders. Write to SR, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH or e-mail sr@swp.org.uk

MAY
New Labour elected with 179 seat majority—the largest for any single party since 1924. Chancellor Gordon Brown gives unelected Bank of England control over interest rates.

JULY
Brown's first budget promises to stick to Tory spending limits for two years, bringing more cuts to cash-starved services.
He helps business by cutting corporation tax from 33 percent to 31 percent. Government announces it will scrap student grants and introduce tuition fees.

AUGUST
Fat cats brought into government. New ministers include BP boss Lord Simon.
Clare Short, international development secretary, causes outrage by saying that people fleeing a volcano in Montserrat will "want golden elephants next".

1997



Bosses loved Brown's budget

SEPTEMBER
Seven people die in Southall rail crash. Government refuses to renationalise rail.
NOVEMBER
New Labour forced to return £1 million donation from Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone.

DECEMBER
New Labour's "welfare reform"—lone parent benefit cuts of £5 to £11 a week, and attacks on disability benefits. A total of 47 Labour MPs vote against cuts for lone parents. Cuts cause wave of protest.

JANUARY
Liverpool dockers forced to end dispute after 28 months. The government was the biggest single shareholder in the Mersey Docks and Harbour company.

MARCH
Gordon Brown's second budget cuts corporation tax on company profits to 30 percent. John Prescott announces plan for "Public-Private Partnership" for London Underground—privatisation.

JUNE
New Labour sets meagre rate for minimum wage—£3.60 an hour for workers over 21, £3 an hour for 18 to 21 year olds.

JULY
Labour insiders who have become lobbyists are accused of using their contacts to gain privileged access for their clients.

SEPTEMBER
Factory closures and big job losses

1998

FEBRUARY
Alun Michael, Blair's favourite, becomes New Labour candidate to head Welsh Assembly after rigged contest.

Macpherson report into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence finds police guilty of "institutionalised racism". Tony Blair and Jack Straw defend Paul Condon, head of the Metropolitan Police.

MARCH
NATO launches air strikes on Serbia.

JULY
Blair writes article, "Why I've Declared War On Welfare", launching systematic assault on benefits.

OCTOBER
Another horrific rail disaster in Paddington underlines the catastrophic state of the network. This time 33 people die. Government still refuses to

1999

Mandelson: "Can you spare a dime?"

in Fujitsu, Siemens and other industries in Britain. Labour refuses to intervene to save jobs.

DECEMBER
Britain and US launch air strikes on Iraq, dropping 400 cruise missiles. New Labour also backs sanctions on Iraq that have caused 500,000 child deaths in all.

Peter Mandelson forced to resign from cabinet after revelation that millionaire Treasury minister Geoffrey Robinson lent him £373,000 to buy a house. Robinson was also forced to resign.

Paddington: a privatised disaster renationalise the railways.
Pensioners told they will receive just 75p a week extra.

NOVEMBER
Government announces big cuts in incapacity benefits. 52 Labour MPs vote against the plans.

DECEMBER
John Prescott announces the privatisation of air traffic control three years after Andrew Smith MP told Labour's conference, "Our air is not for sale."

'Blair has betrayed us on every issue'

The war is Tony Blair's greatest crime, but six years of New Labour has brought shattered hopes on issues such as pensions, health and low pay. Socialist Worker spoke to people at the sharp end who believe Blair has to go

I WAS in the Labour Party for 30 years, from 1970 onwards. I was active in every by-election, council election and general election. I began to get disillusioned with Labour in their first term. There is

a long list of reasons—trade union rights, the paucity of the minimum wage, PFI, student grants, the treatment of asylum seekers and, of course, education.

I was a teacher. I said if Labour brought in performance-related pay I would resign from the Labour Party. They brought it in.

I resigned from Labour in November 2000, but they didn't want me to resign my seat as a local city councillor.

For two years I have been an independent socialist councillor. This year I intend to stand for the Socialist Alliance."

BRIAN PENNEY
councillor, Lancaster

"PEOPLE HAD high hopes that Labour would look at human rights. In fact they have abused human rights. The Terrorism Act is more draconian than any other act for the last 100 years. We have detention without trial.

They have allowed the tabloids to create a climate where "asylum seeker" and "terrorist" mean the same thing.

In my experience of working with asylum seekers, I would say nine out of ten legitimate cases are turned down. The Home Office doesn't give a damn if people have kids, or if they have been raped and tortured."

AAMER ANWAR
civil rights lawyer, Glasgow

"WE WERE delighted when Labour got in, but we have ended up with the Tories Mark B. We have just had a green paper on the civil servants' pension scheme. People were expecting to be able to retire and draw their pensions out—now we have been told that we have to work another five years or accept less.

Blair is hiving off big chunks of the civil service to private companies. The "modernisation agenda" they go on about means breaking down the jobs so we get less training and less pay.

Blair isn't listening to us over anything—not over the war, or privatisation, or pay."

DEEDEE
civil servant, Liverpool

"AS A trade unionist, I am an angry man. How could the Labour Party call trade unionists wreckers? I don't think we should support these people with our money. Life hasn't got any better for the people coming into my shop.

The wise people say this is another Tory government. Nobody likes Tony Blair. People feel betrayed.

It is getting worse to live in Bethnal Green. People are getting more desperate.

The old people who come into the shop are always complaining and counting their pennies. Nothing has been delivered for people like us."

IFTIKHAR UL-HAQ
shop worker, Bethnal Green, east London

"I FIRST voted for the Labour Party in 1945. Since then, I never missed voting Labour in any election.

I once lived near Cheltenham where they doffed their caps to the squire and curtsied to his missus.

They were true blue, but I voted Labour and I let them know it. I was disappointed with Blair even before he got elected because he dumped the red flag and Clause Four.

Since then I have seen things just falling away. This isn't the party I loved and that me and my husband worked so hard for through the 1950s and 1960s.

My three daughters were all brought up to preach the gospel of socialism, as my husband used to say. We kept saying, well, Blair has a lot to make up after Thatcher. But nothing seemed to get better.

We saw the NHS deteriorating. Labour said they were spending millions on it but I was a nurse, my daughter is a nurse, and my granddaughter is a nurse, so we know what is happening. Another daughter is a teacher, a wonderful teacher, but her workload is terrible.

And then there was the firefighters' strike. All these things made us fall out with Tony Blair, but the war on Iraq was the final straw.

The demo in London was wonderful. The young people made me so proud. They were just like I used to be.

I felt that that day a great light was lit that we have to keep burning. Even if they go to war we have to keep protesting.

I was in the Labour Party for 58 years, but six weeks ago me and my daughters left and joined the Socialist Workers Party."

EVA LITTLEFAIR
pensioner, Preston

"I'M UP to my ears in debt and so is nearly everyone I work with in the Post Office. We get by through borrowing and juggling credit cards. God knows what will happen if the interest rate goes up.

New Labour has meant hard labour for me. I'm not starry-eyed about politicians and I didn't think Blair would change much. But I did think things might not get worse.

I just feel squeezed and I think hope is going out of society. You don't feel your kids' lives will be better than yours. Young people must feel that the odds are stacked against them and I think that's why a few get drawn into crime.

Blair has created a society that is so bitterly divided and it's getting worse. He's absolutely on the side of the rich—look at what they're doing to bring selection in for schools and making it harder to go to college. Blair has to go, and I don't think Gordon Brown would be better either."

ANDY PETERS
Manchester

Retired miners at a meeting in Wigan last year were still waiting for New Labour to deliver on compensation over occupational diseases contracted at work

"FIREFIGHTERS WERE very supportive of the Labour Party and helped get it in. Now we face vilification for launching a legitimate pay claim. We are in a bitter battle to defend the fire service.

Most Labour MPs have lost any socialist principles they once had. It's not just Blair. I spoke to a longstanding Derbyshire MP on a lobby. He said the problem was the government is reluctant to raise taxes on people to pay for services.

I said what about using the money more wisely, and asked him how much this war will cost. He sped off, saying he had another appointment. Firefighters have had enough of being

treated with contempt. That's true of other public sector workers as well."

MATT LEE
chair of the Fire Brigades Union in Derbyshire

"IN THE last five years I've found it harder and harder to get by on my pension. The basic pension is £75.50 a week but, like most women, I don't get the full amount because I didn't get enough national insurance stamps.

I get £58 a week—which isn't enough to live on. I wonder if most people know that after six years of a Labour government the average basic pension a woman gets is £51.24—I saw that in a report from Help the Aged last month.

The Labour government has done nothing to make lives better. I see pensioners everywhere who are short of good food, short of a holiday, short of a decent coat.

They're a sort of grey background to life, poor and ignored. Blair is a complete let-down. I hate his war policy, but it has shown up that there is always money for

the things they think are important."

ALICE MEARNS
West Midlands

"I'M A hospital cleaner on £4.70 an hour. I've been in Britain 28 years, I came from Jamaica.

When I arrived here people told me there was a Tory party that looked after the rich and a Labour Party that looked after the poor. I now realise that I must have misheard them. In fact there are two parties that look after the rich and none that looks after the poor.

It's a punishing job in the hospital, hard physical work. But I like it because you feel part of a caring team and part of something worthwhile. But New Labour does not care for us at all.

We are privatised and the company gives us no sick pay scheme. I can't believe the government is letting more privatisation happen in the NHS."

MARLENA GRIFFITHS
East London

"THIS IS a bloody murderous government and I'm enraged about the war.

But I think in all its other policies New Labour have shown the same contempt for anyone but the powerful and the rich.

Life's all right for the people at the top but it's harder than ever for the rest of us. I work long, long hours and I'm expected to be flexible for the employer. I don't get any consideration in return if my child is ill or if I'm a bit late because I have to take her to the doctors.

All this stuff about "family-friendly" from the government is just so many words.

It means nothing for most people. It costs £120 a week for my child at a council-run nursery. Gordon Brown makes great play of tax credits.

But firstly they are incredibly complicated to claim, and secondly if you earn anything but real poverty pay then you're not eligible."

JANET HANLEY
North London

FEBRUARY
Government announces plan to privatise all council homes in Britain.

APRIL
New Labour's policy over refugees is "giving life to racists", says TGWU union leader Bill Morris, as press and politicians whip up hysteria over refugees.

MAY
Ken Livingstone elected as mayor of London, defeating Labour's attempt to block him.

JUNE
Blair is heckled and slow hand-clapped at the Women's Institute, in a display of the growing disillusion with his government.
58 Chinese refugees found dead in the back of a lorry in Dover. Government presses ahead with attacks on asylum seekers.

United Nations report condemns level of child poverty in Blair's Britain.

Livingstone beat off Blair

JULY
Shock figures show that New Labour invests less in the National Health Service than the previous Tory government. Meanwhile, official statistics show gap between rich and poor continues to grow.

SEPTEMBER
Government refuses to restore the link between pensions and earnings.

OCTOBER
Yet another rail disaster, as four die in Hatfield rail crash. Government still refuses to renationalise rail.

2000

JANUARY
Peter Mandelson forced to resign from cabinet again over favours to the super-rich Hinduja brothers.

FEBRUARY
Britain and US launch missile strikes on Baghdad.

JUNE
Blair announces massive privatisation drive, threatening "most fundamental reform of public services for many years".
Labour wins general election but turnout is just 59 percent, the lowest ever. New Labour gets one million fewer votes than when it lost under Neil Kinnock in 1992.

AUGUST
David Blunkett and Burnley council ban an Anti Nazi League carnival.

JULY
Government announces further plans to slash incapacity benefit. Blair condemns "mindless thuggery" of Asian people fighting back against the Nazis in Bradford.

SEPTEMBER
Blair ignores pleas for peace to stand with George Bush and prepares for an attack on Afghanistan.

OCTOBER
Railtrack collapses but Labour pushes ahead with privatising London Underground.

NOVEMBER
Official report shows patients are waiting longer than ever in accident and emergency departments.

JANUARY
New Labour now known to have taken money from Enron, the US energy giant which collapsed in scandal.

FEBRUARY
Blair calls public sector workers "wreckers". Blunkett launches new assault on asylum seekers, saying they must speak English at home.

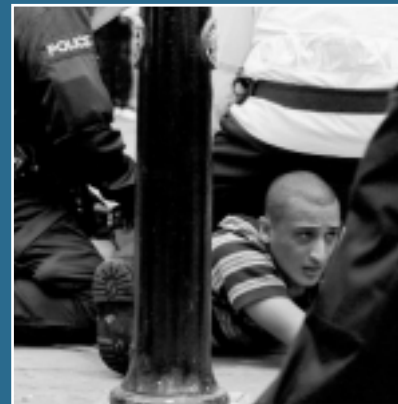
MARCH
Blair once promised to prioritise "education, education, education", but 40,000 striking London teachers disagreed.

MAY
Another rail disaster at Potters Bar. Labour has still not renationalised the railways.

JUNE
Blair still claims to prioritise education, but 30,000 striking college lecturers disagree.

JULY
New Labour preaches the need for

2002



Bradford Asian youths are criminalised

ban an Anti Nazi League carnival.

SEPTEMBER
Blair ignores pleas for peace to stand with George Bush and prepares for an attack on Afghanistan.

OCTOBER
Railtrack collapses but Labour pushes ahead with privatising London Underground.

NOVEMBER
Official report shows patients are waiting longer than ever in accident and emergency departments.



London workers: tired of weighting

"partnership" between bosses and workers. A million striking council workers disagree.

SEPTEMBER
Blair's long awaited dossier on Iraq is unveiled. Central allegation that Iraq has been trying to obtain uranium from Africa now exposed as a deliberate fraud.

OCTOBER
Labour conference sees revolt over the war and PFI. Government stops fire service employers making an offer. Firefighters strike.

And in 2003.....



Fullarton workers in Scotland lost their jobs in January. Millions more could face the same devastation Picture: Duncan Brown

Mad system that drives us into economic chaos

A deep crisis is threatening millions around the world. Chris Harman explains how slumps are a central part of capitalism

IF WAR did not dominate the media headlines something nearly as frightening would—fear of economic slump.

This is despite chancellor Gordon Brown's repeated boast that his pro-business measures meant there could be no return to "boom and bust".

The last week has seen incredible volatility in the world's stock markets—the measure of the market value of the world's great companies. On Wednesday of last week they were valued at exactly half the figure they were in March 2000.

On both sides of the Atlantic, a number of these firms face the threat of outright bankruptcy—and their workers of mass sackings.

This is true of the giant US airline Air America and the steel firm Corus that took over from British Steel just four years ago where 25,000 jobs are now at risk.

More than 500,000 people lost their jobs in the US last month. The *Financial Times*

writes of Europe, "The outlook for the continent's largest manufacturing companies has rarely seemed bleaker.



"Across the continent each country's flagship engineering companies are seeing the same scramble to sell assets and fend off creditors as afflicted BT, France Telecom, Deutsch Telecom and KPN of the Netherlands."

The war is adding to the crisis. But the war is not the main cause of the deepening economic chaos—and it will not come to an end if Iraqi resistance collapses and the multinationals can once again toast each other in cheap oil.

The last US land war against Iraq was over within days and the price of oil rapidly fell back to its previous level. Economic crisis persisted for another year in the US, for three more years in Britain and never came to an end in Japan.

The origins of the economic crisis lie in the absurdity of capitalism.

All through history human beings have had to cooperate with each other to wrest a livelihood out of nature. Technological advance over the last two or three centuries should have made this task easier than ever.

But the means of making a livelihood—the "means of production"—are in the hands of small minorities of very wealthy people organised as companies, or sometimes as state bureaucracies.

They measure their success by their ability to make profits in competition with each other. No one is allowed to get more than the minimum livelihood without working for them.

When profits seem easy to make, they behave like pigs at a trough. Each firm tries to get the biggest share of these by investing in the most technologically advanced equipment.

Each devours raw materials. Each urges its workers to raise productivity, while telling them it cannot afford more than the most minimal wage increases.

Each promises the rich they can make

ever greater sums of money if they invest their money in its latest scheme.

This is the boom. It is always accompanied by speeches by politicians and newspaper articles boasting that capitalism has overcome its old tendency to crisis.

This was the atmosphere in 1929, under the Heath government in 1973, during Thatcher's government in the late 1980s and as the new millennium began.

On each occasion, the boom began turning to bust within months. The reason was simple enough. Firms were simultaneously turning out massively more output and curbing workers' wages and the ability of people to buy that output.

Firms could not just pay their workers enough so that they can buy more goods as that ate into the profits and the competitiveness of the company.

The only way the boom could keep going was if the firms bought an ever greater share of the output in new plant and equipment. They were only prepared to do that if they were able to make even bigger profits.

The moment any event, however small, put these profits in question, the whole house of cards collapsed.

From at least 1997 onwards, major firms were lying and exaggerating their profits by a third or more.

They would see their share prices rise and the rich pour money into their coffers. Speculation and fraud flourished.

'A number of firms face bankruptcy and their workers face mass sackings'

Enron and WorldCom are the best known examples of this. But there was scarcely a major firm that did not join in.

Huge amounts of wealth were wasted on supposedly profitable investments that no one would ever need.

No less than \$1,000 billion dollars was wasted by firms as they built communications systems which would never be more than 10 percent utilised.

Once a crisis starts, the market has a logic of its own that makes things worse. Firms try to protect their profits by sacking some workers and making others work harder for the same or lower wages.

This means there is less money to buy the products of other firms, encouraging them in turn to sack their workers.

In effect workers are told they have to consume less because "too much" is being produced!

This has been happening for two years already, in the US, Europe and Japan. It has been happening on a very large scale in manufacturing industry in Britain.

In Britain and the US the immediate impact of the crisis has been counteracted by people building up greater amounts of personal debt. In Britain, rising house prices encouraged many people to do so.

Now fear of the future is causing people to panic over their debts. There are signs that spending in the shops is beginning to fall and there are widespread prophecies of a collapse in house prices.

Faced with a crisis, mainstream economists and politicians pour out messages that can only make the crisis worse.

"Modernisation" is the cry of New Labour, meaning working more with fewer people for less. "Cut public expenditure" is the cry of the Tories, meaning the state providing less of a market for the output of workers in other industries.

How will the slump affect workers?

YOU CAN never tell how severe any capitalist crisis will be. What happens depends in part on the completely irrational hopes and fears of capitalists—what the pro-capitalist economist Keynes called their "herd instincts".

If the war is short, they may think it is possible to make profits by investing again. That might even lead to a brief period of economic recovery, before another crisis develops.

But they might panic and withdraw investments so as to speculate in something like gold.

In that case the crisis will deepen. The crisis can also deepen if giant firms or banks are shown to be much deeper in debt than they have been pretending.

This is especially likely because of the huge scale of speculation through the "derivatives" market (a form of crude gambling), which has more than doubled in the last five years.

The US economy is dependent on massive borrowing from the rest of the world. If fear of the impact of war leads to a fall in the value of the dollar, then this money could flood out of the US.

This is a possible outcome, but by no means a certain one.

You will already be suffering from the crisis if you work for firms like Corus or BT.

If you have spent years doling out money for an occupational pension, watch out. Firms which took a holiday from paying into such funds in the late 1990s bet the money collected from their workers on the stock exchange.

Now it is falling, one after another is trying to welch on their commitment to pay the pensions they owe.

The crisis and war on Iraq

THE ECONOMIC crisis is being made worse by the war. But it is a product of the same system as the war.

Each of the giant firms that dominates the world economy is linked to a greater or lesser extent to a major state.

The powerful states like the US, Japan, France, Britain or Germany will do their utmost to open up markets and win contracts for their firms in other countries.

When crises erupt, the state becomes a powerful mechanism for trying to protect its major firms against the impact.

The US state intervened five years ago to stop the huge derivatives speculator Long Term Capital Management collapsing.

The Japanese state is currently doing its best to stop the country's banks going bust. There is even talk of nationalising them.

The Bush administration in the US has shown that it will forget its own "free market" ideology to protect major US firms. It has imposed controls on imports of steel from abroad—one of the things damaging Corus.

It can only get away with such things if it can be a dominating influence in world negotiations over trade and finance.

The hardcore group around Bush of Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Cheney and Richard Perle believe it has one card to play that the other powers do not—overwhelming military might.

They see waging a succession of wars on the weak powers they refer to as "rogue states" and the "axis of evil" as a way of showing who's boss not only to the poorer countries of the world, but also to big capitalists of Europe, Japan, Russia and China.

●Chris Harman is the author of *Economics of the Madhouse*, available from Bookmarks for £3.50. Phone 020 7637 1848.

in my view

A tradition of true democracy

MANY YEARS ago when the benefits of parliamentary democracy were shared by very few of the world's population, the Russian revolutionary Lenin pointed to a fundamental problem.

He argued that "hidden beneath the polished exterior of modern democracy are deceit, violence, corruption, mendacity, hypocrisy and oppression of the poor".

Tony Blair's New Labour has managed to illustrate each one of them in six short years. One measure of the outcome is the declining number of people who vote in elections.

It is increasingly obvious that parliamentary power is a fig leaf covering the real power of national and global financial and business institutions. The slogan "No war for oil" has focused attention on this truth.

An alternative, popular democracy has to be one where economic power is subject to political power not the other way round.

Working class delegates to the Chartist National Convention of 1839 were among the first to argue for this. However it was the workers of Paris in 1871 who first created a democratic system based on this principle.

Facing an army of occupation and a hostile French government the working people of the city built the Commune.

As Engels put it, "In the first place, it filled all posts—administrative, judicial and educational—by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, subject to the right of recall at any time by those same electors.

"In the second place, all officials, high or low, were paid only the wages received by other workers." Limited to Paris, the Commune was destroyed. But violence could not destroy the idea.

Workers' parliament

The soviets, or workers' councils, born in Russia in the early years of the last century were something similar to the Paris Commune.

They were created in the revolution of 1905 to challenge the authority of the Tsarist system. They consisted of delegates from workplaces and communities.

In the revolution of 1917 the soviets became the workers' parliament. It was from their ranks that the country's administration was drawn—planning the provision of food, housing, education, transport and defence.

Delegates were paid the average working wage and subject to recall.

The tragedy of the soviets was that they were created in the appalling circumstances of war and civil war, dislocation, isolation and hardship.

They provided an example of a different way to arrange the affairs of a society based on equality, planning, and popular democratic control.

In Spain in 1936 workers sought similar solutions. Facing fascist invasion and a weak Republican government, workers across the country took control of the workshops, farms and local communities.

Of Barcelona, George Orwell noted, "Above all there was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom. Human beings were trying to behave as human beings and not as cogs in the capitalist machine."

In Hungary in 1956, in the face of a puppet government and Russian intervention, workers' councils sprung up over the country.

The same impulses were felt in Portugal in 1974 and today in Argentina where local committees have been formed.

Different historical situations demand different solutions. Yet what is startling is the common thread which runs through them. Existing forms of government do not meet the needs of people.

Masses of people throw off their passivity when they feel a real involvement in creating solutions to the problems of real life.

by JOHN CHARLTON

DISSENT IN THE WORLD OF ARTS

Last seen during the Vietnam War

MRS EXECUTIONER Bush decided to give her husband a break from organising mass murder by having a nice poetry reading at the White House two weeks ago.

Sadly for her, every single one of the poets she invited refused to attend in protest at Bush's war madness.

Meanwhile, George Michael has to be stopped from wearing his "No war—Blair out" T-shirt on *Top of the Pops*.

Award winners at the BAFTA beanfeast have to be threatened with pulled plugs if they use their speeches to attack the war (whereupon Saul Zaentz does just that).

Something is happening and you don't know what it is, do you, Mrs Bush?

Whatever happens in their obscene war, the fact is that Bush and Blair have created a mood of dissent and resistance in the world of the arts that we have not seen since Vietnam.

Last week Michelle Collins (of all people) signed the *Mirror's* anti-war petition and said that she did not know ANYONE in "showbiz" who supported Blair.

Where once in his pomp he could summon fawning A-list celebrities to Number Ten, now Blair is reduced to hustling invitations to an MTV studio where an audience of young people tear him apart.

What is so exciting about this movement of opinion against war is that it has nothing to do with bandwagons.

Above all else, it is founded on simple decency and even political intelligence.

So Dustin Hoffman said in London a couple of weeks ago, "I believe that this war is about what most wars are about—hegemony, money, power and oil."

That's a profound truth that quite eludes gutless ranks of Labour Blairheads.

My theory is that actors have been uniquely placed to see through the war propaganda of Bush and Blair.

After all, actors pretend

by BOB LIGHT

for a living, and they can spot a third rate liar when they see two.

We can be proud of the fact that the stop the war movement has won the political argument so comprehensively that Blair has to rely on the intellectual pondlife of the Tory Party (oh, and the *Observer's* Nick Cohen, of course).

We can likewise take pride in the fact that so much artistic talent is on our side.

We've got REM, The Dixie Chicks, Harold Pinter, Spike Lee, Steve Earle, Susan Sarandon and Samuel L Jackson (and thousands more). Blair's got Jim Davidson (and, er, Nick Cohen).

But in the US there are ugly signs that a right wing backlash is gathering momentum.

Bush might come across as Forrest Gump without the brains, but as his record of approving more executions than any governor in US history shows, he is utterly vindictive. Bush will come to shove—we can be sure of that.

US television is even more obsequiously conservative than the BBC.

And in the broadcasting sewers there is the network of talk radio "shock jocks" like Rush Limbaugh who pour out their Rottweiler politics 24 hours a day.

Already these Stupid White Men are baying for revenge on "Hollywood celebrities abusing their status".

The first actor in their sights is Martin Sheen, who is being threatened by NBC with the sack from *The West Wing* for his role

MARTIN SHEEN'S opposition to war has led to a right wing backlash against him

in opposing the war.

Sean Penn is now reported to have been sacked from his new movie by producers keen to appease the Bush machine.

Witch-hunts are a way of life in American right wing politics.

Nix

During the Vietnam War all of the movie actors who stood up to oppose the war saw their careers suffer.

The most prominent anti-war campaigner, Jane Fonda, was slandered as "Hanoi Jane" and barely worked for ten years.

And that was nothing compared to the savagery of McCarthyism in the late 1940s and early 50s.

As the US slithered into the Cold War, the ruling class moved to nix all semblance of American radicalism.

Their ultimate target was always the trade unions, but they first attacked high visibility radicals in Hollywood using the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).

Anyone even thought to be left wing was subpoenaed, defamed and then blacklisted by the studio bosses if they refused to grass on their friends.

Ten went to prison. Hundreds more were sacked and driven into exile.

A few committed suicide in a spiteful cull that lasted well into the 1960s.

Recently one of the vic-

tims of that purge, screenwriter Bernie Gordon, now 83, summed up his bitter experience to forewarn the new generation of protesters:

"I think the suppression of dissent which is what the HUAC was all about is one of the most shameful periods of American history.

"I think it's very necessary for people in America to know that it's happening again.

"I think what they're doing in relation to non-citizens of Arab extraction is just as shameful.

"What we call McCarthyism, the whole anti-leftwing hysteria, was a way of saying that you have to conform to the ways of the people who run this country or you are an enemy."

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM 98

New issue of International Socialism, a quarterly journal of socialist theory

- The anti-capitalist movement and the war—Sam Ashman
- The Cairo anti-war declaration
- Crisis, revolt and the left in Argentina and Brazil—Mike Gonzalez, Robert Saenz and Isidoro Cruz Bernal

Available from **Socialist Worker** sellers, price £3



ANTI-IMPERIALISM A GUIDE FOR THE MOVEMENT

£10

Major handbook for activists on war and the system, with an introduction by Tariq Ali.

Contributors include Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, Louise Christian, Lindsey German, George Monbiot and George Galloway.



Available from Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop, 1 Bloomsbury Street, WC1 (phone 020 7637 1848), and from other good bookshops.

meetings, forums and events | tel: 020 7538 5821 | e-mail: forums@socialistworker.co.uk

IF YOUR AREA ISN'T SHOWN PHONE THE NUMBER ABOVE

Big ideas in informal settings

Marxist forums

BIRKENHEAD
Advertising the body: why sexism sells
Thu 20 Mar, 7.15pm, Oxton Green Community Centre, Christchurch Rd.

BIRMINGHAM HANDSWORTH
Can we have a world without war? Thu 27 Mar, 7.30pm, Summerfield Community Centre, Dudley Rd.

BIRMINGHAM KING'S HEATH
Can we have a world without war? Wed 26 Mar, 7.30pm, Dance Cafe, Mosely Rd.

BIRMINGHAM SPARKBROOK
Can we have a world without war? Thu 27 Mar, 7pm, Shahenshah Restaurant, Ladypool Rd.

BLACKWOOD
How powerful is the media? Mon 24 Mar, 7.30pm, Blackwood Miners Institute.

BRISTOL BEDMINSTER
How do we fight fascism? Wed 26 Mar, 7pm, Southville Centre, Beaulay Rd.

BRISTOL MONTPELIER
Is there an alternative to capitalism? Thu 27 Mar, 7pm, Bristolian Cafe, Pilton St.

BURNLEY
Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience
Tue 25 Mar, 7.30pm, Shalamar, Church St.

CAMBRIDGE
Imperialism: is it the armed wing of globalisation? Thu 20 Mar, 7.30pm, CB2, Norfolk St.

CANTERBURY
Is this the best democracy we can have? Thu 27 Mar, 7.30pm, Pascutti Cafe, High St.

CARDIFF
Can people power topple Blair? Tue 25 Mar, 7.30pm, Shot in the Dark Cafe, City Rd.

CHESTERFIELD
Blood, oil and the Middle East
Wed 26 Mar, 7.30pm, Assembly Hall, Education Centre, Market Place.

COLCHESTER
Crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour Mon 24 Mar, 8pm, RAD Hall, Walsingham Rd.

CRAWLEY
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East
Wed 26 Mar, 7.30pm, Three Bridges Community Centre, Gales Place.

CREWE
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East Thu 27 Mar, 7.30pm, upstairs, King's Arms Hotel, Earl St.

DONCASTER
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East Wed 26 Mar, 7pm, The Point, South Parade.

ECCLES
Can we stop fascism?
Wed 26 Mar, 7.30pm, Eccles Library.

EXETER
Can people power topple Blair? Wed 26 Mar, 6pm, Dinosaur Cafe (nr clock tower).

GATESHEAD
Can people power topple Blair? Thu 3 Apr, 7.30pm, Library, Prince Consort Rd.

HARLOW
Revolt and resistance in Latin America Wed 26 Mar, 8pm, Polly's Pantry, Wych Elm.

HUDDESFIELD
Was Marx the first anti-capitalist? Thu 20 Mar, 6pm, Coffeevolution, Wood St.

LEEDS BEESTON
Vietnam: when the US was humbled Thu 27 Mar, 7.30pm, Tunstall Road Community Centre.

LEEDS CHAPELTOWN
Latin America in revolt: an eyewitness report from Venezuela Thu 20 Mar, 7.30pm, West Indian Centre, Laycock Place.

LEEDS HAREHILLS
Are women liberated today?
Wed 2 Apr, 8pm, Pakistani Community Centre.

LEEDS HEADINGLEY
Is this the best democracy we can get? Thu 3 Apr, 8pm, Delicatessen Coffee Bar, Hyde Park Corner.

SOCIALIST WORKER ACTIVISTS SCHOOLS

THE SOCIALIST Workers Party is organising activists schools throughout the country over the next few weeks.

The schools will debate how socialists can take the anti-war movement forward and fight for change. They will discuss "From people power to revolution", "Marxism and oppression" and "How do we organise for revolution?"

Schools will be held in Newcastle, Sheffield, Manchester, Birmingham, Hull, Nottingham, Margate, York, Norwich, Swansea, north London, west London, south east London and east London **THIS SUNDAY**, 23 March.

Waltham Forest in east London, Milton Keynes, Ipswich, Portsmouth and Brighton will hold schools on Sunday 30 March.

For more information phone 020 7538 5821 or e-mail enquiries@swp.org.uk

LEICESTER
Imperialism and workers' revolt in Latin America
Mon 31 Mar, 7.30pm, Cafe Mozart, London Rd.

LINCOLN
Can we have an equal world?
Tue 25 Mar, 6pm, Nourish, 1 Newlands.

LIVERPOOL AIGBURTH
Venezuela: is Chavez facing a Chile-style coup? Wed 26 Mar, 7.15pm, Collect Gallery, Lark Lane.

LIVERPOOL CITY CENTRE
Vietnam: the last time the US was humbled
Wed 26 Mar, 7.15pm, Quincey's cafe, Bold St.

LIVERPOOL TOXTETH
Blood and oil: the hidden history of the Middle East
Thu 27 Mar, 7.15pm, Yemeni Community Centre, Lodge Lane.

LOWESTOFT
Is this the best democracy we can get? Thu 17 Apr, 7.30pm, Havelock, Love Rd.

LUTON
Is this the best democracy we can have? Mon 31 Mar, 7.30pm, Finnigans Cafe, Manor Rd.

MANCHESTER CHORLTON
Parliament versus the people: their democracy or ours?
Mon 24 Mar, 7.30pm, Chorlton Library.

MANCHESTER CHEETHAM HILL
How can Palestine be free?
Thu 27 Mar, 7pm, Saffron Restaurant, Cheetham Hill Rd.

MANCHESTER HULME
Is revolution possible?
Mon 24 Mar, 7pm, The Arch Bar, Stretford Rd.

MANCHESTER LEVENSHULME
How can Palestine be free?
Thu 27 Mar, 7.30pm, Sultan Corner, Stockport Rd.

MANCHESTER PRESTWICH
Parliament versus the people: their democracy or ours?
Thu 27 Mar, 7.30pm, dining room, Ostrich, Bury Old Rd.

MANCHESTER RUSHOLME
Does the media control our ideas? Thu 20 Mar, 6.30pm, Jaffa Restaurant, Wilmslow Rd.

MANCHESTER WITHINGTON
Does our movement need political parties? Wed 26 Mar, 6.30pm, Withington Library, Wilmslow Rd.

MILTON KEYNES
Is this the best democracy we can have? Sat 29 Mar, 2.30pm, YMCA, 402 North Row.

NEWCASTLE HEATON
If money and missiles can cross borders, why can't people? Thu 27 Mar, 7.30pm, Chillingham, Chillingham Rd (opp Metro).

NEWCASTLE WEST END
Does the media control our ideas? Wed 26 Mar, 7.30pm, Lynwood Business Centre, Lynwood Rd.

NEWPORT
The US grand strategy: can the empire be stopped?
Tue 1 Apr, 8pm, Usk Room, Newport Centre.

NORTHAMPTON
What is the grand strategy of the American Empire?
Thu 20 Mar, 7.30pm, Cafe Msaada, Kettering Rd.

NORWICH
Can we have an equal world?
Thu 27 Mar, 7.30pm, The Forum, Millennium Library, City Centre.

NOTTINGHAM ST ANN'S
Can people power topple Blair? Thu 20 Mar, 7.30pm, The Chase Neighbourhood Centre.

NOTTINGHAM SHERWOOD
Can we have a world without war? Tue 25 Mar, 7pm, Katmandu, Mansfield Rd.



OLDHAM
Can people power topple Blair? Sat 29 Mar, 2pm, Gallery Bar 360.

OXFORD CENTRAL
Zimbabwe: is Mugabe tyrant or liberator?
Wed 26 Mar, 7.30pm, Mitre, High St.

OXFORD EAST
Why are asylum seekers under attack? Wed 2 Apr, 7.30pm, East Oxford Community Centre, Cowley Rd.

PORTSMOUTH
Blair's democracy or ours?
Sun 23 Mar, 7pm, Cafe Citrus, Albert Rd, Southsea.

PRESTON
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East
Tue 25 Mar, 7.30pm, Unity Community Centre, Shepherd St.

ROCHESTER
Is this the best democracy we can get?
Thu 27 Mar, 8pm, Eon Internet Cafe, High St.

ST ALBANS
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Mon 31 Mar, 7.30pm, Trinity Church (cnr Beaconsfield Rd/Victoria St).

SCUNTHORPE
Does the media control our ideas? Mon 31 Mar, 7.15pm, Central Community Centre, Lindum St.

SHEFFIELD HEELEY
Are women liberated today?
Wed 2 Apr, 7.30pm, Hartley Street Community Centre.

SHEFFIELD NETHER EDGE
Can people power topple Blair? Thu 20 Mar, 7.30pm, Merlin Theatre, Meadow Bank Rd.

SHEFFIELD SHARROW
If money and missiles can cross borders, why can't people? Thu 20 Mar, 7.30pm, Highfields Library, London Rd.

SOUTHAMPTON
Can war lead to revolution?
Thu 20 Mar, 8pm, Cook House, St Mary's St.

SOUTHEND
If missiles and money can cross borders, why can't people? Thu 3 Apr, 7.30pm, Coffee House, Chichester Rd.

SUTTON COLDFIELD
Can we have a world without war? Tue 24 Mar, 7pm, Three Tuns Hotel, Lichfield Rd.

SWANSEA
Is this the best democracy we can have? Wed 2 Apr, 7.30pm, Uplands Diner.

WATFORD
Can people power topple Blair? Thu 20 Mar, 7.30pm, Cafe Giordano, 1st floor, Harlequin Shopping Centre.

WORTHING
Does the media control our ideas? Wed 2 Apr, 7.30pm, Barney's Cafe, Portland St.

YORK
Weapons of mass deception: do the media control our ideas? Wed 2 Apr, 8pm, Guppy's, Nunnery Lane.

FORUMS IN LONDON

ARCHWAY
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East Wed 26 Mar, 7.30pm, Bonjour Bonsoir, 542 Holloway Rd.

BAYSWATER
Divide and rule: why asylum seekers are not to blame
Wed 2 Apr, 7.30pm, Coffee Island, Westbourne Grove.

BRENT
School students in revolt
Wed 2 Apr, 7.30pm, Willesden Library Centre, Willesden High Rd.

BRICK LANE
Is this the best democracy we can have? Wed 2 Apr, 7.30pm, Coffee@Brick Lane.

BROMLEY
Vietnam: when a mass movement stopped a war
Mon 24 Mar, 7pm, United Reform Church, Withmore Rd.

CAMDEN
Is this the best democracy we can have?
Wed 26 Mar, 6.30pm, Marlina's Snack Bar, Camden High St (opp Argos).

CROYDON
Advertising the body: why sexism sells Thu 20 Mar, 7.30pm, Spice Cafe, Surrey St.

EAST HAM
Is revolution possible?
Thu 3 Apr, 6.30pm, Indo-Ceylon Cafe, St John's Rd.

ELEPHANT & WALWORTH
Anti-capitalism: does the movement need political parties? Thu 27 Mar, 7.30pm, Pullens Centre, 184 Crampton St.

EUSTON
Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience
Wed 26 Mar, 6.30pm, Cafe Muse (opp British Museum).

FINSBURY PARK
Does the media control public opinion? Wed 2 Apr, 7.30pm, Gadz Cafe, Clifton Terrace (opp e).

HOUNSLOW
Can real change come through parliament? Thu 20 Mar, 7.30pm, Committee Room, Montague Hall, Montague Rd.

LADBROKE GROVE
Can people's power topple Blair? Tue 25 Mar, 7.30pm, Paddington Arts Centre, Woodfield Rd.

LEWISHAM
If missiles and money can cross borders, why not people? Wed 26 Mar, 7pm, Hunkarim Turkish Restaurant (cnr Lee High Rd/Marischal Rd).

LEYTONSTONE
Che Guevara: more than just a revolutionary icon? Wed 26 Mar, 8pm, Gannett's (off Lee Bridge Rd).

MILE END
Can we have a world without war? Wed 26 Mar, 7pm, Orange Room Cafe, Burdett Rd.

NEW CROSS
Is this the best democracy we can have?
Tue 25 Mar, 7pm, Moonbow Jake's Coffee Bar, New Cross Rd.

POPLAR & ISLE OF DOGS
The grand strategy of the American Empire Wed 2 Apr, 7.30pm, Island House, Roserton St.

SEVEN SISTERS
Can people power topple Blair? Wed 26 Mar, 7.30pm, Duygu Turkish Restaurant, 105 West Green Rd.

SHOREDITCH
Does the media control our ideas? Thu 20 Mar, 7pm, Barley Mow (cnr Curtain Rd/Rivington St).

STREATHAM
Divide and rule: why we don't blame asylum seekers Wed 26 Mar, 7.30pm, Boogalu's, Sunnyhill Rd.

VICTORIA
Can people power topple Blair? Mon 24 Mar, 6.30pm, King's Head, 139 Buckingham Palace Rd (cnr Arlington St).

WATERLOO
Crisis in European politics
Sat 5 Apr, 6pm, Capital Kebabs, The Cut (nr Young Vic).

WOOLWICH
Is this the best democracy we can get?
Wed 26 Mar, 7.30pm, upstairs, Earl of Chatham, Thomas St.

UNIVERSITY FORUMS

LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY
The ecstasy of history: what is a revolution?
Wed 26 Mar, 2pm, Guild of Students.

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
Empire of fear: Bush's war at home Thu 20 Mar, 6pm, Hong Kong Lecture Theatre.

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY
Refugees: if money can cross borders, why can't people? Thu 20 Mar, 5.30pm, MR4, Student Union.

SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY
War, tie-dye and weed: can culture change the world? Wed 26 Mar, 7pm, Peaks (in the workspace).

THAMES VALLEY UNIVERSITY
Can people power topple Blair? Thu 27 Mar, 2pm, Sports Hall, Student Union.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
Is revolution necessary? Tue 25 Mar, 1pm, Chadwick Lecture Theatre, Main Quad.



INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION
The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD
The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM
The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country. In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbians and gays.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

Join the socialists

Fill in this form and send it to PO Box 82, London E3 3LH	
Name	E-mail
Address	
Postcode	
TU/college/school	Phone

Links

Anti Nazi League
www.anl.org.uk
☎ 020 7924 0333

Globalise Resistance
www.resist.org.uk
☎ 020 7053 2071

Stop the War Coalition
www.stopwar.org.uk
☎ 020 7053 2155/6

Socialist Alliance
www.socialistalliance.net
☎ 020 7791 3138

Defend Council Housing
www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk
☎ 020 7987 9989

Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers
www.defend-asylum.org
☎ 07941 566 183

Spark
☎ 07905 998 675

Scottish Socialist Party
☎ 0141 221 7714

Local SWP

Barnsley
07881 558 590

Birmingham
07949 028 362

Black Country
07941 834 125

Bradford
07811 403 299

Brighton
07808 368 551

Bristol
07711 718 519

Cambridge
07950 142 464

Camden & Islington
07961 337 640

Cardiff
07815 775 819

Central London
07957 316 094

Chesterfield
07881 558 590

Coventry
07712 047 873

East Anglia
07946 269 024

East London
07801 290 411

Exeter
07939 558 115

Hackney
07788 770 741

Home Counties
07905 589 865

Kent
07950 610 257

Lancashire East
07968 952 180

Lancashire West
07931 725 633

Leeds & West Yorkshire
07734 265 291

Manchester
07946 413 763

Merseyside
07952 410 718

Norwich
07733 137 201

Nottingham
07956 477 778

Plymouth
07803 620 390

Portsmouth
07801 290 411

Scotland (SW Platform)
07855 023 739

Sheffield
07905 678 506

South East London
07951 737 003

South London
07734 706 256

Southampton
07811 210 036

Swansea
07759 901 392

Thames Valley
07929 618 579

Tyneside
07748 653 627

Waltham Forest
07796 697 271

West London
07958 996 777

York
07984 132 371

1,500 pack peace assembly

Delegates call for action to stop war



OVER 1,500 delegates packed into an inspiring "People's Assembly for Peace" in Westminster Central Hall last week.

It centred around unprecedented demands about what to do when the war starts.

Delegates called for a campaign of mass civil disobedience, strikes and direct action to stop the war.

Unlike the politicians in the Houses of Parliament the assembly reflected the huge anti-war feeling of the majority of the population. Delegates came from as far as Aberdeen and Plymouth.

They came from stop the war groups, trade unions, workplace groups, community organisations, pensioners groups, students from schools, colleges and universities, religious groups and peace organisations.

Trade union leaders urged their members to take to the streets against the war.

Groups of school students inspired all the delegates with their determination and energy to do everything to stop the war.

Tony Benn said, "Tony Blair is ignoring parliament, ignoring the people and be-

having like some sort of medieval king, and we will not accept it. This is not the moment we give up. This is the moment we really start."

Katy Bannon from Wimbledon School of Art summed up the spirit of the day when she said, "Tony Blair is one. We are millions. We can stop him."

Chris Bambery from the Socialist Workers Party was given a standing ovation when he said, "The time for talking is over. It is now time for action."

"The school students are right to ask their mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, that if they can strike against war, why can't you?"

"If we take action people will follow. We should not just say 'Not in my name' but 'In my name we're going to stop Blair'."

Labour MPs who oppose the war, George Galloway, Alice Mahon, Jeremy Corbyn, Alan Simpson and John McDonnell, also spoke.

End

"Tony Blair can be leader of a country that goes to war behind George Bush or he can be leader of the Labour Party. He can't be both," said John McDonnell.

"This assembly is speaking for Britain while the other parliament of which I am a member is speaking for George W Bush," said George Galloway.

"This assembly should call on British forces to refuse to fight and invade Iraq."

John Rees from the Stop the War Coalition said, "There is one very important message to take back from this meeting. This is the beginning of the end of the Blair administration."

"We have a mass international movement. The day they begin bombing we will try to bring towns and cities to a halt."

"And the following Saturday we will have demonstrations in every capital city around the world."

The assembly unanimously agreed "a declaration for peace".

The declaration, moved by Salma Yakoob from the Stop the War Coalition in Birmingham, urges people to "take whatever action may be required to ensure its adoption as the policy of our country".

The Stop the War Coalition is urging people to place the declaration as an advertisement in their local paper, deliver it to their MPs, invite local authorities to endorse it, reproduce it as a leaflet and to use it as a basis for a petition.

■ **The full document of the Declaration of the People's Assembly is available from the Stop the War Coalition on www.stopwar.org.uk**



ANTI-WAR PROTESTERS at the peace assembly

Lessons from schools

STUDENTS FROM Pimlico School in central London walked out of school to attend the assembly.

Nine of them took it in turns to give their reasons why the war is wrong.

- (1) "War is killing loads of people for no reason."
- (2) "The US is only doing this for Iraq's oil, to protect its own financial interests."
- (3) "The US wants to re-establish itself as the world's biggest superpower."
- (4) "The US thinks it's the world's moral police, despite the corruption in its own country."
- (5) "This war is immoral and no one wants it."
- (6) "Blair is ignoring everyone. We should keep shouting so Blair can't ignore us."
- (7) "War under any circumstances is always wrong."

(8) "This is breaking the rules of human rights and war by attacking Iraq when they haven't been attacked themselves."

(9) "We're children and it's our future Blair is destroying."

Lara and Amber from Mark Rutherford School in Bedford added, "We heard about the school strike the day before. We decided to get our school involved and began to spread the word."

"We expected 100 people to join in. We got 600. It was amazing."

"At 16 you can drink and smoke. Why can't we voice our opinions too at an early age?"

Katrina, aged 14, from Queensbridge School in Birmingham, said, "When we had our strike we were told we were truanting."

"We weren't. We were youth standing up for our political ideals in the world we're growing up in."

KEY TRADE union leaders urged their members to take action to stop the war.

Billy Hayes, general secretary of the communication workers' CWU union, said, "When war breaks out we want to see as many CWU members as possible out on the streets protesting against this war."

"If we're told it's illegal to protest, we say there is a bigger illegality in an attack on Iraq."

"The only thing this government knows is force, and we have to force our opinion on this government."

"If this means we get involved in some small legal niceties, we'll worry about that when it happens."

"Isn't it about time the TUC said trade unionists should get out on the streets and fight against this war?"

Bob Crow, leader of the rail workers' RMT union, also issued a rallying cry for action, saying, "We've got to pile the pressure on."

"We've got local elections coming up in May. We should ask every single councillor, do you support the war? If they do, then we

should support candidates standing who are against the war."

"If Tony Blair is going to take illegal action then we should also take illegal action in the form of civil disobedience."

"We need non-violent demonstrations. If that means sitting on motorways stopping the traffic, sitting in the streets, occupying our factories, then so be it."

Mick Blackburn, assistant general secretary of train drivers' Aslef union, said, "Some train drivers have already taken action to stop war materials."

Risk

"This assembly will call for such action and some of our members will support it. They could be putting their jobs or their union at risk but that is not the same as the risk faced by the Iraqi people."

Paul Embury, a London delegate from the firefighters' FBU union, said, "There is no moral justification for this war. It also makes no economic sense."

"Many firefighters are

asking, how is it that the government can spend three and a half billion to kill people in Iraq but can't find a fraction of that for the firefighters?"

"It's possible that the government may try to impose a strike ban in the course of the war. That is an unjustified attack on our civil liberties and, quite frankly, we shall continue with our strikes."

Walk

Unjum Mirza, an RMT union rep on London Underground, said:

"In London the RMT has agreed that we will support every member who protests, up to and including industrial action, in the event of war."

"We will twin our branches in London with local Stop the War groups to coordinate local protests."

"I work at Mile End station in east London. I know a demonstration is due to come past Mile End in the event of war, from local schools, colleges and civil servants' workplaces. My members hope to walk out as that demo approaches."

Pictures: RAY SMITH

Take to streets, say trade unions

ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

On the streets

THERE WERE a number of local anti-war demonstrations last weekend.

AROUND 8,000 protesters marched through Leeds to send an eleventh hour message to Bush and Blair.

The biggest demo in Leeds for 20 years was boosted by feeder marches from around the city, including a large contingent of school students.

The march was colourful, noisy and very determined to continue opposing war on Iraq.

There were dozens of banners, many from local schools, and a tablecloth with the message "Buns not bombs".

Organisers were especially pleased with the turnout because the demo was built in just two weeks.

CHRISTIAN HOGSBJERG

"THE BIGGEST demonstration we've ever seen in the city" was what many people said about the stop the war march in Exeter. Over 3,500 people marched, far more than we were expecting.

Anti-war groups from Cornwall, Dorset and Somerset joined the rally. Coaches brought protesters from Penzance, Bodmin, Plymouth and Barnstaple.

Many school students joined the march. Speakers at the rally included a local Iraqi man and musician Billy Bragg.

Those speakers who talked about building mass action when war started received the best reception from the crowd. Liz Allnatt from Exeter and Pete Heddle from Plymouth both announced they would be standing as Socialist Alliance Against the War candidates in the May local elections.

They both got an enthusiastic response.

MIKE GURNEY

SOME 3,500 people joined an anti-war demonstration through York, making it one of the largest marches the city has ever seen.

Five feeder marches from colleges and local areas gathered at Clifford's Tower.

A group of 15 year olds from Eastmoor Comprehensive said, "We came 15 miles



SCHOOL STUDENTS blockade the centre of Oxford

on the bus this morning to get to the demo.

"A local doctor has been told to get ready to go to join the army out there, and he has a new baby.

"Why should he have to go and do something he doesn't believe in?"

"Tony Blair should listen to us. It's us that will be paying for it all in the long run."

The medieval city streets were full of chanting, whistling protesters marching to a rally outside York Minster.

They heard speeches from a broad range of campaigners and peace activists.

Chris Fuller from York Against the War got a huge cheer when he said, "If Bush and Blair launch a military strike, we should launch an anti-war strike.

"If they try to occupy Iraq, we should occupy our schools and colleges."

JUDY COX

THE STOP the War Coalition march in Bournemouth was very successful, with up to 1,000 marchers.

There were lots of banners. The march was very lively, with whistles and shouts echoing round the town.

A rally was held in Central Gardens after the march with

speeches and music. It all made a great day.

VALERIE FRENCH and BOB COX

UP TO 2,000 people demonstrated in Newcastle. At the end of the march around 100 people gathered to hear a reportback from the People's Assembly in London.

There were brief animated reports from the delegates followed by a serious discussion about opposing the war.

Then the meeting split into local groups. People living on streets next to each other met for the first time.

People had been on their feet for hours, but the gathering was really lively.

JOHN CHARLTON

AROUND 500 people marched through Tower Hamlets in east London in a protest directed at the two pro-war local Labour MPs.

Oona King and Jim Fitzpatrick have ignored the overwhelming anti-war feeling among their constituents and have backed Bush and Blair's war.

"No war—Blair out! No war—Oona out!" was one of the chants of protesters who marched down Brick Lane, the heart of the area's Bangladeshi community, and through Bethnal Green.

A majority of local councillors, from the ruling Labour and opposition Liberal groups, have come out against war.

TOWER HAMLETS STOP THE WAR COALITION

SOME 500 people turned up to the Coventry stop the war rally on Thursday of last week.

Jeremy Corbyn MP, Andrew Murray and Salma Yaqoob from Birmingham Stop the War Coalition spoke before some brilliant contributions from the floor.

Over 200 names were collected from people wanting to get involved in stop the war activities.

The rally voted unanimously to support the motion put forward at the People's Assembly.

JOE VARNEY

STUDENTS FROM Hampstead School, Glenda Jackson MP, novelist Maggie Gee and local trade unionists were among the speakers at a lively rally organised by Brent Stop the War on Saturday.

The most enthusiastic applause came when speakers emphasised the need to take action on the day war breaks out.

In the morning Stop the War supporters had picketed Paul

Boateng MP's surgery in Harlesden.

He met ten of them. When one constituent mentioned oil Boateng went ballistic and completely lost his cool.

SARAH COX



ON THE march in Newcastle

UP TO 1,000 school students protested in the centre of Oxford against the war last week.

We planned the walkout the week before, after our school, Cheney, refused to let us join the national protest.

We produced posters and advertised the protest through word of mouth. The police underestimated how many would show up and only had two people on duty.

There were hundreds of students from Cheney, Cherwell, St Augustine's, Isis Middle, Cardinal Newman Middle, Oxford School and Gosford Hill.

The police overreacted and called in police horses. They didn't allow us to assemble near a war memorial, and pushed and shoved us up to the University Parks instead. But the authorities had shut the gates.

We were crushed together. That's when we broke through the police lines to get back to the city centre. This wasn't a riot, but a serious protest.

We forced them to pack up an army recruitment stall and people now know a lot more about the issues.

ALICE HAMMOND



BIGGEST MARCH for years in York

BT call centres

Long distance connections

WORKERS AT 34 BT call centres were to stage protests on Thursday of this week over the company's plans to axe 2,200 jobs and transfer work to India.

The battle goes to the heart of debates over capitalist globalisation.

Some commentators have argued that opposing BT's plans will hit Indian workers, and so is based on a narrow nationalist outlook.

The workers' CWU union has rightly rejected this argument.

It says, "The CWU has no issue with India or Indian workers. Our issue is with BT."

BT plans to cut jobs in its centres running the 192 directory enquiries service. It wants to transfer work to two call centres in Delhi and Bangalore in India.

Behind the move is a scramble to cut costs and boost profits at the expense of workers everywhere.

It is driven by the logic of a "race to the bottom" built into the process of capitalist globalisation.

As the CWU says, "BT's reasons for wanting to move work to India are almost entirely cost based. The pay of a call centre worker in India is approximately £3,000 per annum."

BT is a hugely profitable company. Its latest figures, for the three months to December 2002, show a £521 million profit, up 37 percent on the previous three months. That's £66 a second.

But like every corporation BT is driven to cut costs in the face of competition.

Sometimes it is argued that national governments have no control over the process of globalisation.

That is disproved by the action of the British government.

Its official Ofcom telecom watchdog has used "competition" as the excuse to abolish BT's monopoly on directory enquiries.

Rival multinationals launched their own directory enquiries services on Monday.

Myth

US corporation The Number has a service based at a Cardiff call centre, while Irish corporation Conduit operates from centres based in Swansea and Cardiff.

These firms will undercut BT by making workers work harder for less money, and in some cases by attacking or refusing union rights.

BT's response to such threats is to look for even cheaper labour and move work to India.

It is a myth that most companies can simply switch operations around the globe easily.

But in some industries, most obviously those like telecoms, companies can move operations much more easily.

The only requirements are stable communications links, and skilled, and in BT's case, English-speaking, workers.

BT does not give a damn for any Indian workers it will employ.

They will be told to work often unsociable and long hours at miserable pay.

And no matter how hard

they work, the instant BT finds it can move to say another Indian city or another country where wages are even lower it will do so.

Accepting the logic of BT's plan means workers everywhere buying into a race to the bottom.

The kinds of pressures this leads to are already being felt in British call centres.

Hundreds of call centre workers in Thornaby and on Tyneside in north east England have just accepted wage cuts of between 12 and 25 percent to keep their jobs.

Their employer Npower said the alternative was the jobs moving elsewhere.

Unfortunately the workers' Amicus union responded pathetically. "It was two hard choices really," said Amicus official Dave Harrison. "One was lose your job, the other was have a reduction in wages."

Race

But there is another choice.

This is to reject the bosses' logic, and instead stand up to the corporations, which are more vulnerable to workers' action than they pretend.

The CWU is right to protest and would be right to follow with more hard hitting action such as strikes.

BT has plenty of money and can be forced to abandon its plans.

The threat of seeing its £66 per second profits plummet as workers struck would concentrate the minds of BT's board members wonderfully.

Workers can fight for levelling up.

That was the stance advocated by the RMT, and its predecessor unions, over the issue of seafarers on Britain's merchant fleet.

The union insisted it has no issue over what nationality the people doing the work were, and argued that they should all be paid the proper rate.

Capitalist globalisation faces workers and their unions with a stark choice. Either unite to fight the corporations on this basis or be sacrificed in a race to the bottom.

■The call centres where protests were planned on Thursday are in Aberystwyth, Ayr, Bangor, Bathgate, Blackburn, Bury St Edmunds, Cardiff, Carlisle, Chelmsley Wood (Birmingham), Cheltenham, Crewe, Dudley, Dundee, Glasgow, Gloucester, Grimsby, Hereford, Hillsborough, Inverness, Kingstanding (Birmingham), Kirkcaldy, Lowestoft, Mansfield, Margate, Middlesbrough, Milton Keynes, Newport, Nottingham, Portadown, Ryde, Stockport, Sunderland, Torquay and Yeovil.

The protests will run from 11am to 2pm. The CWU union is appealing for "other trade unionists" to "show solidarity on the day by visiting the site".

obituary

Norma Wilson

IT IS with immense sorrow that we record the death of Norma Wilson, for many years a full-time organiser for CND in Manchester.

Norma died after a long, courageous and cheerful battle against cancer.

Many readers will have heard Norma speak at Marxism.

There she passionately set out the appalling human cost of depleted uranium weapons—the very weapons that Bush and Blair are about to inflict again on the people of Iraq.

Norma was a tireless campaigner for peace. After she left the Labour Party in disgust, she was an active friend of the left across the north west, backing the Socialist Alliance, supporting the Anti Nazi League and campaigning for asylum seekers.

Norma was a lovely person, warm and generous in her dealings with



everyone who fought for peace and justice.

It is no small thanks to her consistent and principled work that the anti-war movement across Greater Manchester succeeded in achieving its high levels of unity in action.

As bloody conflict again descends on the Middle East, Norma Wilson will truly be mourned—and remembered with the deepest affection.

■COLIN BARKER

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN BY 12 NOON MONDAY

Steel workers

Facing job destroyers

STEEL WORKERS at Corus plants across Britain were waiting anxiously at the start of this week to find out if their jobs were for the chop.

The Anglo-Dutch company Corus had told its workforce that up to 4,000 jobs would go as part of a "restructuring package" to boost profits.

That is on top of over 10,000 jobs that have gone over the last two years.

As they waited to find out their fate, steel workers were outraged to hear that Tony Peddar, Corus's failed chief executive, was getting a payoff of at least £550,000 as his reward for slashing thousands of jobs.

by CHARLIE KIMBER

This is nothing new.

When John Bryant and Fokko van Duyn were axed as co chief executives two years ago they were paid off with more than £2 million.

Terry, a Port Talbot steel worker, told *Socialist Worker*, "Peddar was the man who went round South Wales eyeing up the plants for closure last time.

"He laid the basis for the closure of Ebbw Vale and ending steel production at Llanwern. I'm glad he's gone, but I don't see why he should get 25 times a steel worker's redundancy money for his butchery.

"Now they're bringing back Sir Brian Moffatt to head the company.

"He was in charge when Corus was formed and it's been a disaster ever since."

Some reports indicated that Corus might close one of its three major plants—Port Talbot, Scunthorpe or the Teesside plant at Redcar.

Other commentators predicted that the firm might cut a swathe through the smaller plants.

Whichever option they choose, it means steel workers taking the rap.

In previous years Corus's forerunner British Steel made huge profits, money that was thrown at shareholders who collected nearly £700 million

STEEL WORKERS across Europe are being pitted against each other. The best response is to fight back, like these 50,000 steel workers and their supporters marching against job cuts in Liege, Belgium, last week

when Corus was formed in 1999.

Why should workers be put through the wringer now?

Alan, a Teesside steel worker, told *Socialist Worker*, "It's been excruciating waiting for the news.

"If my job goes then I know I'll never get another on

the same money or anything like it round here. And I'm over 40 so maybe there will be nothing at all.

"We've worked our guts out for Corus. Whenever they have demanded a new productivity record we have met and surpassed what they demanded. Not that it has done

us any good."

The main steel trade union, the ISTC, has condemned Corus's plans and pledged that workers will "not go quietly". That has to be turned into action to rock Corus and increase the sense of political crisis that can force the government to intervene.

Journalists

BBC STAFF fighting for the reinstatement of journalists Adli Hawwari and Abdul Hadi Jiad have stepped up their campaign.

World Service bosses sacked the journalists on 19 February in an attempt to silence two outspoken critics of BBC management.

Adli and Abdul Hadi have played a leading role in campaigning against racism and bullying in the BBC.

NUJ union reps voted unanimously to call for a BBC-wide ballot for action in defence of the two activists.

The NUJ has launched a national campaign for Adli and Abdul Hadi's reinstatement, with officials speaking at workplace meetings across the country.

Campaigners will also be leafleting workplaces this week, including the offices of the BBC at Millbank in Westminster.

With war approaching, many NUJ activists see the battle to defend Adli and Abdul Hadi as a key test of union strength.

People feel that these sackings are about creating a climate of fear that will make it even more difficult to present the anti-war arguments.

However, NUJ and Bectu members inside the BBC

have been key to organising Media Workers Against the War groups.

An NUJ rep told *Socialist Worker*, "BBC workers are, like millions of others, furious about the war.

"New anti-war groups have sprung up in several BBC workplaces in the last week.

"We are determined not to be silenced by Bush, Blair or Greg Dyke. That's why defending Adli and Abdul Hadi is so crucial."

Bectu activists have also been centrally involved in the campaign to defend the two sacked journalists. **BBC WORKER**

Women's TUC

This year's women's TUC conference in Liverpool was the angriest I have attended.

Throughout the conference, opposition to government policies on issues such as equality legislation, pensions, privatisation and the firefighters' dispute was linked again and again to the senseless waste of lives and resources in a war.

Mary Davis from Natfhe argued that mass protests made a difference.

The conference ended early with an anti-war protest in Liverpool city centre. **SUE BOND**

Asylum seekers

THE COMMITTEE to Defend Asylum Seekers is raising £10,000 to publish its open letter condemning racist hysteria toward asylum seekers.

The CDAS plans to publicise the letter at the end of April during the May election campaign.

Alan Simpson MP is the latest to sign the open letter, joining Bob Crow, Bruce Kent and others.

ALAN GIBSON
■Download copies of the statement from www.defend-asylum.org
Send donations to BCM Box 4289, London WC1N 3XX.
Cheques payable to Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers.

Postal workers

How to win on pay

AROUND 30,000 postal workers in London begin a consultative ballot on 31 March for action over the London weighting allowance. The region is acting because the national union has refused to launch the campaign.

MARK DOLAN, a north London branch official, explains why CWU members should vote yes for action.

Socialist Worker strongly backs the call for action but, to reflect the debate surging through the union, we also print an alternative view from **LEE BARON**, branch secretary of Northamptonshire Amal CWU.

THE CLAIM for £4,000 London weighting deserves the support of the whole union.

If we win then it will open the way for improved pay for the whole of Britain.

It is not about more for London and damn the rest of the country. Some people are saying that every extra pound for London workers is a pound less for workers in Glasgow or Birmingham or Manchester.

But that's a bosses' argument. They always say there's only a fixed amount of money and that if the business concedes more for part-timers or for maternity rights or for shorter hours or whatever then it must come off the basic pay.

The trade union argument is that we want to force more money from management.

Every other union follows that logic over London weighting.

When Unison and the GMB and TGWU launched a fight for improved weighting for London council workers, it didn't mean less for council workers in the north of England.

It's the same among teachers or in the colleges.

Why should the CWU be different?

In fact if we can break the Post Office over London weighting then it would be much easier to break them over basic pay.

It is not our fault that basic pay is so low. London has consistently voted against accepting the crappy deals.

Last year the same union leaders who are now criticising the London fight were central to throwing away a golden opportunity to fight for better pay for everyone.

Nationally we voted two to one for strikes, but then John Kegg—the union's deputy general secretary—dithered for three months before surrendering to Royal Mail bosses and accepting a two-year deal no better than the one we had originally balloted over.

We don't want a regional pay system and we don't want a fractured union.

The divide in the union is between those who want to fight and those who don't—all the regional stuff is just a cover over that.

The best way to unify the union is for everyone to support London workers when they fight for better weighting and for the whole union to have a serious campaign over basic pay.

Those two battles can run together, not in opposition to each other.

MARK DOLAN

NORMAN CANDY outlined the campaign in London to increase London weighting in a recent edition of *Socialist Worker*.

What he failed to outline was the concern from areas outside of London that by seeking this increase outside of national pay bargaining the door is opened to regional pay.

All postal workers, regardless of location, are underpaid.

That does not give any of us the right to submit a pay claim direct to the chairman of Royal Mail plc.

It is against the democratic decisions made by the CWU, it is against the long tradition the union has on national pay bargaining and it goes against members outside of the catchment area.

battles of left and right. The CWU is being divided by geographical boundaries where a division of the union is seeking an increase outside of the policies agreed by the rest of the union.

Norman states he wants a yes vote to "push national leaders". I find that incredible when he is on the national executive of the union and so is one of the national leaders.

The national union must take on these issues—but it has to take on these issues for all members.

The national union has a mandate to increase London weighting.

By dealing with the issues for all members we can keep the principle of national bargaining at the heart of the CWU.

Nobody would disagree that members in London deserve more. Nobody would disagree that all postal workers deserve more. But the way in which we seek better pay for all our members must be through the national union.

My first ever strike action was as an 18 year old postman fighting an employer hell bent on imposing regional pay.

It was a one-day strike that lasted two weeks and ended with a national union united on national bargaining.

I am not prepared to stand by and watch as that principle is threatened by the union who defended it so well in 1988.

LEE BARON

In brief

Rebel music at the opera

A FULL-scale rebellion came closer at the English National Opera last week.

The head of music, Tony Legge, quit his job as part of a growing revolt over management plans to cut staff.

Musicians have been told they face cuts just weeks after the ENO chorus went on strike against the axing of one third of their jobs.

The chorus plan a second strike on 3 April.

Last Monday ballot forms were sent to stage technicians, costumiers and maintenance staff.

Charging to a payout victory

CONTROL officers in London fire brigade have won a victory over congestion charges.

Brigade management had refused to compensate the fire-fighters and control staff for paying the charge.

Control offices were furious because of the cost but also because their emergency worker status was in question.

An angry meeting voted unanimously for strike action.

The chair of the ruling Labour group caved in almost at once.

TONY PHILLIPS, Unison branch secretary London region fire authority, personal capacity

CANDY UDWIN AND DAVE CARR

Demand Candy and Dave's reinstatement to Unison. For factsheet phone 07958 732 334 or e-mail candyanddave@hotmail.com

Send messages of support to Camden Unison, 59 Phoenix Road, Brill Place, London NW1 1ES

Hailing a strike against racism

TAXI DRIVERS in Burnley went on strike for three days from noon on Friday of last week in protest at increasing attacks on drivers.

The area has seen a rise in racism since the election of three British National Party councillors.

In nearby Oldham taxi driver Israr Hussain was stabbed to death last December.

Sameer Ul Rehman was attacked in Burnley last week after he left his car to challenge youths who had thrown an egg at his taxi.

Taxi drivers decided to take immediate strike action.

Prospects for political voice

SOME 105,000 members of the Prospect civil servants' union began a ballot for a political fund on Wednesday of this week. The ballot will end on Wednesday 9 April.

The national executive is urging a yes vote.

Workers accept pension deal

WORKERS at Peugeot's Coventry plant have voted by two to one to accept a new pay deal from the company.


The 3,500 struck for a day last month after rejecting the first offer.

Peugeot bosses offered a pay rise of 7.3 percent over two years but wanted workers to increase their pension contributions.

After the strike the company offered to postpone increasing pension contributions until October.

POST WORKER

In this issue:
George Galloway,
Billy Hayes
and more.
Available from 07904 157 779 or write to Post Worker, 109 Evelyn Court, Amhurst Road, London, E8 2BQ



Socialist Worker

FIREFIGHTERS MUST NOT BE BLACKMAILED

It's a matter of principle

THE TORIES and the government are using the cover of war to launch an attack on the firefighters which threatens the freedom of every worker in Britain.

Tory defence spokesperson Bernard Jenkins, government ministers and the media are attempting to witch-hunt the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

A 24-hour strike had been called for Thursday this week but the FBU executive was meeting to discuss this as *Socialist Worker* went to press.

There was speculation at the start of this week that this Labour government could use the Tories' 1992 anti-union law to ban the strike.

The government has already launched a filthy smear campaign against the firefighters and their union. It is accusing them of being "unpatriotic" in pressing their long-running pay campaign during war on Iraq.

Hypocrisy from politicians

But as Paul Embury, a firefighter at Islington station, north London, says, "This is the latest in a long list of attacks on us.

"The government talks about patriotism. But what is patriotic about sticking the boot into workers in the British fire service?"

Adrian Clarke, the secretary of the FBU in Cambridgeshire, is one of many firefighters who have been in the armed forces. He told *Socialist Worker*, "I served aboard HMS *Antelope* during the Falklands War.

"On 23 May 1982 we were hit and the ship was sunk. I saw shipmates lose their lives, dying horribly.

"As a consequence of my own ac-

tions I received a personal recommendation for a gallantry award.

"I still have nightmares and the sights I saw will stay with me until my dying day. For the last 18 years I have served my community as a firefighter.

"I am utterly sickened by comments from politicians about us being 'friends of Saddam' or 'unpatriotic'.

"This is coming from people, including newspaper editors, who are always happy to send others—overwhelmingly working class—off to war but would never dream of risking themselves.

Clamping down on democratic rights

"The Tory Bernard Jenkins walked out of a radio debate with me. So much for his courage.

"Make no mistake about this, banning our strike or trying to intimidate us into abandoning our fight is a fundamental attack on human rights.

"This is supposed to be a war for democracy, yet they are starting with clamping down on democratic rights at home.

"If the trade union movement allows this to happen, it will mean giving up the right to strike back. It will let the employers and the government get away with any attack they want to make.

"And let's remember this war is wrong. I do not believe bombing innocent civilians is the way to get rid of Saddam Hussein.

"I speak as someone who knows the fear of waiting for the bombs to drop and hoping that they miss you, and feeling the guilt of surviving when others have not been so lucky.

"The government could have settled our pay claim at any time over the last six months and more. We should not be blackmailed by an illegal war into not fighting for what we deserve at home."

The majority of firefighters oppose the war. Reports from station meetings and brigades show a clear majority behind striking on Thursday.

The propaganda offensive against the firefighters is designed to create a minority against striking and use it, however small, to demoralise the rest.

"We need a clear lead," says Neale Williams from the FBU in north London.

"There's no point offering more talks with the government, or suggesting we could shift our strike dates.

"That strategy has got us nowhere. It has led to the insulting offer put to us last week.

"The government, through the employers, made that offer knowing they were going to launch a war no matter what the United Nations decided.

"We've got to have the same sense of determination and planning. It is time to step up the strike action and for the rank and file to be put firmly at the centre of deciding the strategy to win.

"Where there are wobbles, it is because we have had a stop-go strategy for so long. People will rally together if there is a determined fight and the union goes flat out to win solidarity from other trade unionists.

Solidarity is needed now

"Any legal moves against us should be met with defiance from our union. Our leaders have repeatedly said we would break the law to defend our right to strike.

"And it should be met with solidarity strike action from the TUC."

A special conference of the FBU was to take place in Brighton on Wednesday of this week to discuss the pay campaign.

Activists from a number of brigades and regions were to press for the union to go back onto the offensive.

Firefighters need to feel a wave of solidarity from other trade unionists, who will face the same filth in the press if they have to strike during this war.

■ **The new issue of Red Watch, the voice of rank and file firefighters, can be ordered from 07973 521 594 or 07939 021 094.**



Picture: RAY SMITH

THE GOVERNMENT and the Tories are using the cover of war to attack firefighters

Don't be without
Socialist Worker

From your newsagent

Dear newsagent
Please could you reserve ____ copies of *Socialist Worker* every Thursday for:

Name

Address

Phone

ISSN 1475-9705. Newsagents: if you have problems ordering *Socialist Worker*, please phone 020 7538 3305

Subscribe direct

Dear Socialist Worker Circulation Department
I would like to subscribe to *Socialist Worker* for

☐ 3 months (£12) ☐ 6 months (£24)
☐ 12 months (£48)
☐ I would like ____ copies of *Socialist Worker* to sell

Name

Address

..... Postcode.....

Phone

Special offer

Noam Chomsky's new book *Power and Terror*, free with all six-month and one-year subscriptions

Cheques/POs payable to Socialist Worker
Socialist Worker Circulation Department,
PO Box 82, London E3 3LH
E-mail subscriptions@socialistworker.co.uk
Phone 020 7538 3305 for card orders



ISSN 1475-9705